

LITERARY STUDY OF RASAYANA AND ITS ROLE IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF IMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Rasayana Chikitsa is one of the important branches of *Ayurveda* which helps to maintain the healthy life style. According to *Ayurveda*, *Rasayana* improve immunity and perform many vital functions of human body. *Rasayana* therapy is a part of preventive *Ayurvedic* healthcare. It helps to delay the process of aging and thus helps to live longer with good strength and immunity. All classical texts have explained *Rasayanas* in brief details. *Acharyas* of *Bruhatrayi* and *Laghutrayi* have dedicated separate chapters for explaining *Rasayanas*. Diet, drugs and regimens which promote longevity and prevent diseases are called *Rasayana*. Many herbs and dietary material can act as *Rasayana* and work as immune stimulant, antioxidant, adoptogenic and anti-stress agent. *Rasayanas* are also known to have anti-infective properties. As health-related awareness increases in the population, people become more conscious about their future health. This makes to grow public interest towards *Rasayana* therapy which has ultimately resulted in increased life expectancy and thus contributing to rise in elder population. *Rasayana Chikitsa* boosts the *Ojas* (vital force of life) and immune system. *Rasayana* is the tool to create premium *Dhatus* so when the quality of *Dhatus* enhances results are strong immune system to fight against diseases, longevity, development of body and youthfulness. The ultimate aim of *Rasayana* therapy is to correct *Dosha* disturbances & improve *Agni* and *Dhatu* function.

Keywords *Ayurveda, Rasayana, Ojas, Vyadhikshamatva, Agni, Dhatu.*

INTRODUCTION: *Ayurveda* has two aims i.e. prevention & promotion of health and secondly cure from the disease.^[1] *Acharyas* promoted the use of *Rasayana* to enhance the *Oja* and immunity. *Rasayana* therapy means rejuvenation therapy. In addition to several *Ayurvedic* medicines for the prevention of various diseases, *Ayurveda* recommends a number of anti-aging supplements called *Rasayana*. *Rasayana* means that which helps in attaining the excellent *Rasadi Dhatus*.^[2] There are numerous *Rasayana* therapies explained in traditional *Ayurvedic* texts. *Rasayana* is helpful to increase the immunity of the person to keep him away from the disease. *Rasayana* are health promoting and rejuvenating agents which by their empirical effects produce

resistance against disease both physically and mentally.^[3] The concept of *Rasayana Chikitsa* as a branch which has its own importance not only in the old age but also need to be commenced in the early stage.^[4] The ultimate aim of *Rasayana* therapy is to correct *Dosha* disturbances & improve *Agni* and *Dhatu* function which overall improves strength, immunity, *Ojas*, vitality, longevity, memory, intelligence and excellence of luster.

The word *Rasayana* is composed of two words *Rasa* +*Ayana*. *Rasa* means nutrition and *Ayana* means microcellular channels and hence *Rasayana* essentially means nutrition at microcellular level. These *Rasa* nourishes the body and stimulates the immunity of the body and keeps the person healthy.^[5]

Rasayana in different Samhitas

Acharya Charaka starts Chikitsa Sthana with Rasayana and Vajikarana giving still more priority to Rasayana.^[3] In this chapter Charaka has described therapeutics of two types: Swasthasya Urjaskara(which promotes strength and immunity) and Artasya Roganut(which alleviates disorders).^[6] That which promotes strength and immunity is mostly included in Vrishya and Rasayana while the therapy of the second group is mostly used for alleviation disorders.^[7]

Acharya Susrut has introduced a number of newer Rasayana drugs as Kalamegha(Andrographis paniculata Nees.), Varahikanda(Dioscorea bulbifera Linn.), Golomi(Acorus calamus Linn.), chhattra(Anethum sowa Kurz.), Atichhattram(Anethum sowa), Gambhari(Gmelina arborea Linn.), Phala(Aegle marmelos) and Karvira(Nerium indicum Mill.).^[8]

Acharaya Vaghbata in Ashtang Hridaya has omitted the description of Divya Rasayana i.e. Divine Rasayanas and has incorporated several number drugs for medicinal use such as Rasona(Allium sativum Linn) and Palandu(Allium cepa Linn).^[4]

Chakradutta has emphasized the role of Sansodhana therapy as a Purvakarma(precursor) for Rasayana therapy. The therapy which sustains ageing and prevents the diseases is known as Rasayana. It should be administered in early or middle age after purification of the body. Rasayana therapy administered to the person without prior Shodhana (purification) does not effects properly like dyeing in a dirty cloth.^[9]

Sharangdhar Samhita does not show a separate chapter on Rasayana Chikitsa though essential information about Rasayana therapy is available in this text. The most significant description available in this Samhita on this subject is the definition of Rasayana. Thus the Bheshaja (drug) which destroys Jara (old age) and Vyadhi (disease) is known as Rasayana.^[10]

According to Bhavaprakasha, following salient features, beneficial actions and essential effects of Rasayana-Jaravidhvanshi (preventing old age), Vyadhi Vidhvanshi (destroying the disease), Vayasthambhakara (age sustaining), Chakshushya (promotion of vision), Brimhana (nourishment of Dhatus), Vrishya (virility promoting) and Bheshaja (quality drug).^[11]

In Yogaratnakara, there is full separate chapter on Rasayana. The definition of Rasayana is same as described by Charaka.^[12]

Oja : The term Ojas has been stated in Ayurvedic classics to stand, not only for Sleshma but also for Rasa and Rakta.^[13] There are two types of Ojas i.e. Para and Apara. These two types of Ojas have a direct bearing on body's defense against decay, degeneration and infection. Charaka has also described Apara Oja in Arthedashamahamulya adhyaya.^[14] In this context Chakrapani comments that the quantity of Para Oja is 8 drops (Ashtabindu) and it is located in Hrudaya. The seat of Apara Oja (Ardhanjali) on other hand is the ten Dhamnis connected with Hrudaya.^[15]

Ojas is the Sara i.e. essence of all Dhatus. It is originated like honey gathered by bees from various flowers and fruits. Ojas is derived from all the Sapta Dhatus in other words all the Dhatus contribute to the making of it.^[16] The entire body with its limbs and organs is permeated with Ojas and 'Tat Abhavasca Shiryante Sharirani Saririnam' i.e. in the absence or deficiency of Ojas in the body cause wasting, decay, degeneration and destruction.^[17]

Immunity

The word "Vyadhikshamatva" is often correlated to immunity. Vyadhi means disease and Kshamatva means capacity to defend. The quality of the Dhatus determines the intensity of Vyadhikshamatva.^[18] When etiological

factors come in contact with body they try to produce disease. At the same time body tries to resist the disease. This power of the body, which prevents the development of disease or resists against the developed disease, is called *Vyadhikshamatva*. Principles of *Vyadhikshamatva* in *Ayurveda* are free from diseases and lead healthy and prosperous life.^[19]

Immunity is the ability of the body to protect against all types of foreign bodies like bacteria, virus, and toxic substances etc. which enter the body.^[20]

There are two types of immunity^[21]

1. **Nonspecific or Innate immunity** is considered as the first line of defense without antigenic specificity. Its major components are:

- Humoral – comprised by complement.
- Cellular – consists of macrophages, neutrophils and natural killer cells.

2. **Specific or Adaptive immunity** is characterized by antigenic specificity. Its main components are:

- Humoral – consists of antibodies formed by B cells.
- Cellular – mediated by T cells.

The body's resistance is importance in the health of living beings, for prevention and rapid recovery from disease. Majority of *Rasayana* drugs works on multiple areas and helps in achievement of immunity through its *Dipana*, *Pachana*, *Medhya*, antioxidant, adoptogenic and immunomodulators properties.^[22]

Indications for *Rasayana*^[23]

- Age between 16-70 tears
- Oleated person
- Purified person

Contraindications for *Rasayana*^[24]

- *Anatmavan* – those who do not self controlled
- *Aalsi* – lazy person
- *Daridra* – poor
- *Pramadi* – unstable person
- *Vyasani* – addicted person
- *Papkruta* – the sinful
- *Bheshajapamani* – those who do not respect medicine.

Benefits of *Rasayana* therapy^[25]

- *Rasayana* therapy is supposed to nourish blood, lymph, adipose tissue and semen and thus prevent freedom from chronic degenerative disorders like arthritis and disease of senility.
- *Rasayana* is thought to improve metabolic processes which result in best possible biotransformation and produce the best quality bodily tissue and delay senility and prevent other diseases of old age.
- *Rasayana* builds natural resistance against infection. Increase immunity and have an immunomodulatory effect which prevents any kind of autoimmune disorders.
- *Rasayana* therapy reduces oxidative stress, reduces free radical injury and delays aging.

Table No.1- Effect of Rasayana

<i>Acharya Charaka</i> ^[2]	<i>Acharya Susruta</i> ^[26]
Promotes Longevity of life	Sustains age and youthfulness
Improved mental and intellectual competence	Increase in life-span
Provides immunity against diseases resulting in positive health (<i>Arogya</i>)	increase intellectual capacity and strength
Delays ageing process by preserving Youthfulness	Freedom from diseases (i.e. immunity is increased)

Improvement in the complexion and luster of the skin (<i>Prabha</i> and <i>Varna</i>)	<i>Sarva Upghatshamaniya</i> i.e. Cures all the ailments and problems
Enrichment in voice (<i>Swara</i>)	Acts as rejuvenator and general restorative treatment
Excellence of body glow (<i>Kanti</i>)	
Optimization of strength of body and <i>Indriyas</i> (motor and sense organs)	
Command over speech/ infallibility of speech (<i>Vaksiddhi</i>)	
Attaining Humbleness and politeness(<i>Pranati</i>)	
Proper, accurate balanced and premium production of all the <i>Sharir Dhatus</i>	

DISCUSSION: According to *Ayurveda*, *Rasayana* therapy affects the body and mind and brings balance between the physical and psychic wellbeing. By strengthening immunity *Rasayana* does nourishment to all *Dhatus*, thus improving resistance against the infectious disease. It prevents muscles and tissue damage, thus delays the ageing process. Thus *Rasayana* not only rejuvenates the body and mind but it also prevents infections and diseases. The immunity of a person is increased due to regular use of *Rasayana*. The person becomes healthy and strong. Thus *Rasayana* helps in obtaining the optimum nourishment to the *Dhatus*.^[27]

Ojas and immunity is interlinked. If *Ojas* is in physiological state, there is no possibility of development of disease processes including infecting ones like viral/bacterial etc, since the *Ojas* is the *Sara* of *Sapta Dhatus* and naturally imparts profound support and preservation.

Acharya Susruta has defines a healthy man as one who has equilibrium of *Doshas*, normal functioning of *Agni*, normal condition of seven *Dhatus*, beside his soul, the sense organs and mind should be happy and cheerful^[28]. *Rasayana* stands like an answer to solve the problem of

healthful longevity including mental development and resistance against the disease. *Rasayana* is a specialized type of treatment influencing the fundamental aspect of the body i.e. *Dhatu*, *Agni* and *Srotas*.^[29]

Vyadhikshamatva is depends on the presence of *Bala* in the body. *Rasayana* drugs also influence the *Oja* which increases *Sharir Bala*. A person with appropriate amount of *Sharir Bala* is also said *Saptadhatusara*. This provides the capacity to resistance against the external disease causing agents. Thus *Rasayana* can act as immunomodulator, by strengthening the immunity. *Rasayana* works at various levels in the human body and overall result is absolute state of *Vyadhikshamatva*.

CONCLUSION: *Ayurveda* is aimed for the maintenance of *Dhatusamya* and it is basically achieved by preservation of health. Concept of *Rasayana* is designed for both conditions i.e. health as well as diseased. *Rasayana Chikitsa* is a basic therapy for rejuvenation since it attains longevity, intellect, memory and freedom from disease, youth and excellence of lusture. Thus we can say that *Rasayana* has an important role in the immunity enhancement. It is required to create awareness among people about *Rasayana*, which will prevent disease & promote health of the every individual. *Rasayana* drugs are not only immunomodulatory

activity, but also have other effects such as immune-stimulation, anti-stress, antioxidant properties. Scientific studies have proven the effective role of *Rasayana* therapy in the management of chronic life style related diseases and degenerative changes. *Rasayana* is the preventive therapy described in *Ayurveda* which is helpful to maintain health, retard aging process and promote immune system to fight against infection.

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