

**MODE OF ACTION OF RASAYANA DRAVYAS – A CRITICAL REVIEW****Dr. Deshpande Vaishali Shailesh\*<sup>1</sup> and Joshi Abhijit H.<sup>2</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

Rasayana is a different category of medicines defined in Ayurveda. In the history of human race none of the health care systems except Ayurveda has mentioned this group of medicines. In general Rasayana are considered as tonics, but the comparison is not appropriate. Tonics are known to enhance body tissues, but if actions of Rasayana is considered it can be understood that Rasayana have multifaceted actions – in enhancing body tissues, in cleaning of the body systems (Srotasa), in enhancing function of digestive fire (Agni) and a separate class – Medhya Rasayana which have positive effect on cognitive capabilities. However, mode of action of Rasayana Dravyas to achieve these multiple effects need to be understood in detail. In this review article an attempt is made to find out rationale of this multifaceted Ayurvedic treatment named as Rasayana

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Rasayana, Medhya Rasayana, rejuvenation.

**INTRODUCTION**

Healthy and long life has always been a cherished dream of human beings. Ayurveda -science of life; aims on restoration of health and cure of the disease. Rasayana tantra of Ayurveda propagates restorative and rejuvenative modalities to facilitate long and healthy life. The Rasayan tantra in Ayurveda postulates mainly two kind of methodologies i.e. Drugs and psycho-behavioral therapy.

Senility of the body is an inevitable process of life. It can be defined as pathological exacerbation of normal ageing process.<sup>[1]</sup> This decreased adaptation increases the probability of death with the passage of time.

The concept of senility is as old as Vedas and Ayurveda describes it as an inevitable process, which leads to death,<sup>[2,3]</sup> at the same time there is quest to conquer death and disease to live at least a hundred years (Atharvaveda, 19/67/2). As an answer to this desire of long healthful life stands Ayurveda with its Rasayana tantra with the concept of not only preventing or delaying onset of senile changes in the body but actual conversion of age worn body into a youthful one.<sup>[4,5]</sup>

There are so many formulations described in Rasayana. Rasayanas are referred as vitalizers having ‘Best Nutrition’, as their underlying Theme. They are actually responsible for increasing the essence of each dhatu, starting with Rasa resulting in their proportional and

adequate production. Rasayan Therapy helps to replenish the vital fluids and promote vigor and health. Rasayanas essentially refers to acquisition, transportation and circulation of nutrition needed to offer nourishment to body tissues and microcellular perfusion. Such a state of improved nutrition and better qualities of dhatus are claimed to lead to a series of secondary attributes like prevention of aging and diseases, promotion of longevity, talent, immunity against diseases, preservation of youth, luster and complexion mental as well as intellectual competence and increased vitality of the body.

Proper, adequate and balanced production of the Body tissues (Dhatu) depend on the following factors:-

- Providing adequate and appropriate nutritious food material to the body.
- Proper functioning of the channels (srotas) where the Dhatus are produced and through which the product is transported
- Proper functioning and equilibrium of Doshas especially that of Vata, which is responsible for the transportation of processed material
- Proper execution of the digestive power at all levels i.e. Jatharagni, Dhatavagni and Bhutagni.

Rasayana, possess all the above mentioned properties. All these actions do not take place every time by each and every Rasayana. It depends on the need and the underlying problem, according to which a particular Rasayana has to be selected. Some of the Rasayana drugs

may possess all the above listed properties and it is for this reason, that they achieve a fore most place in the list of Rasayana, for example Amalaki. Ghee and Milk are also considered as best Rasayana dravyas. Hence many of the Rasayana dravyas are given along with milk and ghee.

Rejuvenatory therapies act in various ways producing either a direct effect or by creating a conducive atmosphere for the growth and development of the body. As per the Ayurvedic concept of physiology, it may be presumed that a rasayana agent promotes nutrition and other benefits through one of the following modes:-

- 1. Rasayana as nutrition** - It can also be termed as Poshaka Rasayana as it acts directly by enriching the nutritional quality of the foremost Rasa Dhatu. By this mode of action rasayana therapy takes care of the impaired and deficient state of dhatus starting from Rasa dhatu. Thus these regimens nourish the Rasadhatu, which in turn further nourishes the subsequent Dhatus. These rasayanas either in the form of medicines or food products possess high quality of essential and exceedingly beneficial nutrients whereby they directly add to the pool of nutrition and bring about rejuvenation. For e.g. Milk, Ghee, Shatavari, Amalaki, etc.
- 2. Rasayana for Agni** – These rasayans bring about rejuvenation by improving digestion and metabolism. They enhance digestion and vitalize the metabolic activity resulting in turn promotion of nutritional status at the level of body tissues (dhatus). Thus these rasayanas have their action at all the agni vayapar (digestive levels) i.e. Jatharagni level, Dhatavagni and Bhootagni level to produce excellent dhatus. These can be called as Anabolisers. For e.g. Bhallatak, Chitrak, etc.
- 3. Rasayana cleaning Srotasa** – By Promoting the competence of the srotas - or the microcirculatory channels in the Body. Some rasayana agents act on specific or all srotas normalizing their functions making them more competent. This leads to better bioavailability of nutrients to the tissues and improved tissue perfusion. Guggul mentioned in Samhita Granthas and Laghu Trayees is a type of Rasayana which is effective at the level of srotas. The research about the hypolipidemic and anti atherosclerotic activity of Guggulu may be confirmed with the above rasayan action of this herb. Rason is also one of the e.g. of this type of rasayan.
- 4. Rasayana with Medhya effect** – A special class of Rasayana is mentioned in Ayurvedic compendium known as Medhya Rasayana. These are specific medicine with specific form that has beneficial effect on cognition, functions of Indriyas, Mana and Buddhi. Juice of Manudkaparni, powder of Yashtimadhu with milk, juice of Guduchi, paste of Shankhpushpi are mentioned in it.

Memory is defined as ability to revive past sensory impressions, experiences and learned ideas (Wechsler). There is difference between memory and remembering. Memory is passive process and whilst remembering is active process where motivation is required. There are three basic mental processes of memory viz. 1. Registration, 2. Retention, 3. Recall.

There are four methods to assess memory. These are recall, recognition, relearning and reconstruction. There are three types of memory namely remote, recent & immediate. There are many types of drugs, tonics available in market who claim that they enhance the memory

#### Benefits of Rasayana

A brief list of benefits of Rasayana as enlisted by Charaka are as follows.<sup>[6]</sup>

- Promotes longevity of life
- Improved mental and intellectual competence.
- Provides immunity against diseases resulting in positive health
- Delays ageing process by preserving Youthfulness
- Improvement in the complexion and luster of the skin (Prabha and Kanti)
- Enrichment in 'Swara' (voice)
- Excellence of body glow
- Optimization of strength of body and Indriya [motor and sense organs]
- Physical and mental strength improvement
- Command over speech/ infallibility of speech {vaksiddhi}
- Attaining Humbleness and politeness (pranati)
- Proper, accurate balanced and premium production of all the Sharer Dhatus (Right from Rasa Dhatu to the Shukra Dhatu).

Chakrapani while commenting on Vaksiddi and Pranati says that Rasayana bestows the advantage of, power of hypnotism and honor in society respectively.<sup>[7]</sup>

Acharya Vagbhata has also listed the benefits of Rasayana on the same lines of Charak with the only exception being that 'Pranati' advantage is replaced by 'Vrushata i.e. aphrodisiac property.'<sup>[8]</sup>

#### Benefits of Rasayana as per Sushrut

- Sustains age and youthfulness.
- Increase in life-span.
- Increase intellectual capacity and strength.
- Freedom from diseases i.e. immunity is enhanced.
- Sarva upghatshamniya i.e. Cures all the ailments and problems.
- Acts as rejuvenator and general restorative treatment.

#### CONCLUSION

It can be very well appreciate that Rasayana play multiple roles in maintaining health. Categorization of

Rasayana Dravyas according to their action can help in better understanding their actions and appropriate application in clinical practice.

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