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REVIEW ON RASAYANA AND ITS RELEVANCE IN CURRENT SCENERIO

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ABSTRACT:

Rasayana means a path or system to acquire Rasa or adequate nutrition for the body. It is a special therapy or modality which provides proper nourishment to each and every cell or tissue of body. It also normalizes cell functions and preserves health at molecular level. Ayurveda classify Rasayana in to various types that can be used according to their desired need. Medhya Rasayana is specifically indicated in disorders related to neuronal dysfunction. Achara Rasayana deals with behaviour, conducts and social etiquette of an individual. Rasayana is a unique part of Ayurvedic treatment but there are conditions where it is not applicable. Kutipravesika (by entering in specialized compartment) and Vatatapika (with routine activities) are special methods for using Rasayana therapy with eminent effects. There is a wide variety of single herbs and compound formulation that can be used as Rasayana. These drugs have sphere of actions on different systems of body according to their indications. Rasayana drugs are also available according to the prakriti of a person and for nourishment of specific dhatus. Rasayana have very significant role in disorders related to sedentary life style, work related stress, improper food habits and non-communicable diseases, especially in this modern era. Understanding Rasayana on scientific background infers its acceptance as nutraceutical, anti-oxidant and immuno-modulators. On the whole, Rasayana provide physical as well as mental health to a person.

KEYWORDS

Achara Rasayana, Anti-Oxidants, Classification of Rasayana, Immuno-modulators, Medhya Rasayana, Nootropic agents, Rasayana.

INTRODUCTION

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Ayurveda is a science of life and longevity. It emphasizes on the preservation of health as well as prevention of diseases. Broadly, *Ayurveda* is divided in to eight specialities i.e *Ashtang Ayurveda*. *Rasayana* is one among them. 'Rasayana' means a path or way to get rasa or adequate nutrition for the body¹.

Rasayana is a science of nutrition. It provides nourishment to all the seven *Dhatu*². It is not a drug therapy but is a specialized procedure practiced in the form of rejuvenation recipes, dietary regimen and special health promoting conduct and behavior. *Rasayana* does prevention of early ageing or delay its process and preserve youthfulness. It maintains longevity of life, increases vitality and mental competence.

MATERIALS & METHODS

A perspective study of Ayurvedic text about *Rasayana* shows changing trends of emphasis on its consideration and practice. In *Rig-Veda*, it has been mentioned that Gods were using *Rasayana* and the main

substance was herb or preparation known as *Soma*. For making this preparation, *soma* herb were taken and mixed with milk, ghee and honey. Then it was fermented and was consumed after filtering it. It is stated that those who use this preparation can resist fire, water and various weapons. *Rasayana* was elaborately given in the four *padas* or subdivision of very first chapter of *Charaka Chikitsasthana*. *Rasayana* have *Jaranashana* and *Vyadhinashana* as the prime functions³. Afterwards, *Vayasthapana* is added by *Acharya Sushruta*⁴. *Vayasthapana* interpreted as ensuring life up to 100 years⁵.

Classification

Rasayanas primarily have health promotive value and are essential for rejuvenation of body, mind, vital strength and sufficient nourishment to body tissues. There are numbers of classification of *Rasayana* which are based on various factors. *Acharya Charaka* described two types of *Rasayana* on the basis of method⁶. These are –

1. ***Kuti praveshika***: A *kuti* or compartment / indoor ward with certain specification is made. Person should live in this compartment during the entire course of regime accompanied by consuming chosen *Rasayana* drugs. One should have good self-control and determination to undergo this

regime. Examples – *Brahma Rasayana*, *Chyavanprasha Rasayana*, *Amalaka Rasayana* etc.

2. **Vata-tapika** – In this method, people receive *Rasayana* therapy by continuing their daily routine activity. It is easy but less effective method than *kutipraveshika Rasayana*. Examples – *Nagabala Rasayana*, *bhallataka Rasayana*, *Kevala amalaka Rasayana* etc.

Acharya Dalhana in his commentary on *Sushruta samhita* presents a very rational classification in to three types⁷ –

1. **Ajasrika** – When nutrition is taken regularly as food, it is considered as *Ajasrika Rasayana*. It refers to continuous consumption of nutritious diet in order to maintain optimum nutrition by way of direct nourishment. Example - intake of milk and ghee regularly.
2. **Kamya** – This type of *Rasayana* promote health, strength, vigour and vitality.
3. **Naimaittika** – These are used in patients suffering from specific diseases in order to promote the vitality in that particular disease. Example – *shilajatu* in *prameha* and *tuvaraka* in *kustha*.

Medhya Rasayana – There are some special *Rasayanas* which specially influence the *medha* and promote mental

competence. It promotes intelligence and memory. *Acharya Sushruta* describes certain *divya Rasayanas* (divine remedies) which have been claimed to afford total mental transformation and to impart divinity and supernormal powers to man including *siddhis* (accomplishment) and *aisvaryas* (opulence) achievable by higher yogic practices. *Acharya charaka* mention four *medhya Rasayanas* namely *Shankhapuspi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*), *Guduci* (*Tinospora cordifolia*), *Mandukparni* (*Centella asiatica*), and *Yastimadhu* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*). *Shankhapuspi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*) is told superior among them⁸. Besides, a number of other drugs have also been attributed with *medhya* effect. Like juice of *Mandukaparni* with honey, juice of *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia*) with honey, *Yastimadhu* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*).fine powder with milk and *Shankhapuspi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*) – paste of flwer & root with milk.

Achara Rasayana – *Achara Rasayana* is a special contribution by *Acharya charaka*⁹. It mainly deals with good behaviour, self-control and social manners. Such behaviour will give *Rasayana* like quality in our body. For example – respect to elders, avoiding anger and violence, study of religious literature, kindness to living being, caring for weather and climates etc. Probably the code of *Achara Rasayana*

keeps the aspirant free from the emotional disturbances, permits a less stressful life and pronounced anabolic state leading to due health and happiness. In general, *Acharya Rasayana* improves personality, social relationship and physical health. *Ayurveda* highly emphasize on this issue and thus introduces the concept of *Acharya Rasayana* as a 'rejuvenating regimen'.

Action of Rasayana

Rasayana means acquisition, movement or circulation of nutrition needed to provide nourishment to the body tissues and tissue perfusion. General properties of *Rasayana* are to preserve longevity of life, to increase intelligence and intellectual skills, to improve lustre - aura of body and augment voice quality. It also enriches body with a great strength and ensures proper functioning of various sense organ-organ systems¹⁰. *Rasayana* prevents early ageing or slows down the process of ageing and also prevents diseases. It signifies individualistic approach of *Rasayana* therapy. Purification of body before *Rasayana* administration through *Shodhana* (purification of body) is essentially important and *Haritakyaaadi Choorna* has been mentioned for such purpose¹¹. Without *Shodhana*, one may not get desired effect of *Rasayana*¹².

Person unsuitable for Rasayana therapy

Rasayana therapy can be given to person of any age. But *Acharya sushruta* and *Vagbhatta* specially advised this in early and middle age of life. *Rasayana* should not be used in *Anatmavaan*¹³ (a person who is not self conscious, do inappropriate conducts and bewildered), *Alas*¹³ (inactive or lazy) as he will not start the procedure or show idle attitude towards the treatment, *Daridra*¹³ (poor or needy) as the person is not able to purchase medicines or equipments for the treatment, *Pramadi*¹³ (careless) as such person will not follow the instructions or advice properly, *Vyasani*¹³ (habitual to gambling, alcohol addicted) as such person are very uncertain and not trustworthy, *Paapkrit*¹³ (criminal or conducts sinful activity) and *Bhesajapmani*¹³ (disrespect medicine or drugs ,therapeutic procedure) as such person will not take medicines seriously and have no faith towards treatment.

Rasayana drugs

It is clearly stated in *Ayurvedic* literature that *Rasayana* drugs should be chosen according to the suitability or *Satmya* of the person. A large numbers of herbs and minerals are described in *Ayurvedic* classics, which possess ' *Rasayana* effect when used singly or as compounds. Single drugs like *Amrita* (*Tinospora cordifolia*), *Rudanti* (*Capparis moonii*), *Guggulu* (*Commiphora mukul*) and *Haritaki*

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(*Terminalia chebula*) are *Rasayana* herbs told by *Acharya Sharngadhara* ¹⁴. On the other hand, *chyavanprasha* and *brahma Rasayana* are popular compound *Rasayana* drugs. *Vardhman kalp* is a special method used in consecutively increasing dosage schedule with or without special dietary regime, like *Vardhman Pippali Rasayana* ¹⁵. *Acharya charaka* has also described *Rasayana* in specific

diseases like *Sarpigudadi Rasayana* in *Kshata kshina chikitsa*, *Yogaraja Rasayana* in *Panduroga* and *Agastaya haritaki Rasayana* in *Kasa Chikitsa*.

As per *Acharya sharangadhara*, an individual loses one of the ten stages of life processes every decade. Hence, in respective decade, one should select such *Rasayana* which may supplement the specific loss as follows ¹⁶

1-10 years	<i>Balya</i> (childhood)	<i>Vacha</i> (<i>Acorus calamus</i>), <i>Swarna</i> (Gold)
11-20 years	<i>Vridhi</i> (growth)	<i>Kasmari</i> (<i>Gmelina arborea</i>), <i>Bala</i> (<i>Sida cordifolia</i>)
21-30 years	<i>Chavi</i> (beauty)	<i>Amalaki</i> (<i>Emblica officinalis</i>), <i>Lauha</i> (incinerated iron)
31-40 years	<i>Medha</i> (intellect)	<i>Shankhapuspi</i> (<i>Convolvulus pluricaulis</i>)
41-50 years	<i>Tvak</i> (health of skin)	<i>Jyotismati</i> (<i>Celastrus panniculatus</i>)
51-60 years	<i>Drishti</i> (vision)	<i>Jyotismati</i> (<i>Celastrus panniculatus</i>)
61-70 years	<i>Sukra</i> (sexual activity)	<i>Atmagupta</i> (<i>Mucuna prurita</i>), <i>Ashwagandha</i> (<i>Withania somnifera</i>)
71-80 years	<i>Vikrama</i> (physical strength)	Drugs not effective
81-90 years	<i>Buddhi</i> (wisdom)	Drugs not effective
91-100 years	<i>Karmendriya</i> (locomotor activity)	Drugs not effective

In old age, body does not acquire proper nourishment from *Annarasa* ¹⁷. So, desired effect of *Rasayana* drugs after 70 years of age is unsure. It may be the

reason that *Rasayana* are told to be used in early or middle age of life¹⁸.

Rasayana drugs according to *prakriti* of an individual ¹⁹

<i>Vata Prakriti</i>	<i>Bala</i> (<i>Sida cordifolia</i>), <i>Nagabala</i> (<i>Grewia hirsuta</i>) with <i>ghrita</i> , <i>Ashwagandha</i> (<i>Withania somnifera</i>), <i>Shankhapuspi</i> (<i>Convolvulus pluricaulis</i>)
<i>Pitta Prakriti</i>	<i>Amalaki</i> (<i>Emblica officinalis</i>), <i>Shatavari</i> (<i>Asparagus racemosus</i>)
<i>Kapha Prakriti</i>	<i>Bhallataka</i> (<i>Semicarpus anacardium</i>), <i>Rasna</i> (<i>Pluchea lanceolata</i>), <i>Guggulu</i> (<i>Commiphora mukul</i>), <i>Pippali</i> (<i>Piper longum</i>)

Rasayana drugs are also enumerated on the basis of their special action on different *dhatu*²⁰

<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Kharjura (Phoenix sylvestris)</i> , <i>Draksha (Vitis vinifera)</i> , <i>Kasmari (Gmelina arborea)</i>
<i>Rakta</i>	<i>Lauha</i> (incinerated iron), <i>Amalaki (Emblica officinalis)</i> , <i>Palandu (Allium cepa)</i> , <i>Bhringraja (Eclipta alba)</i>
<i>Mamsa</i>	<i>Bala (Sida cordifolia)</i> , <i>Nagabala (Grewia hirsuta)</i> , <i>Rudanti (Capparis moonii)</i> , <i>Aswagandha (Withania somnifera)</i> , <i>Shalaparni (Desmodium gangeticum)</i>
<i>Meda</i>	<i>Guggulu (Commiphora mukul)</i> , <i>Shilajeet</i> (mineral pitch) , <i>Amrita (Tinospora cordifolia)</i> , <i>Haritaki (Terminalia chebula)</i>
<i>Asthi</i>	<i>Laksha</i> (resin of <i>Ficus religiosa</i>) , <i>Vanslochana (Bambusa arunadinaceae)</i> , <i>Prisniparni (Uraria picta)</i> , <i>Shukti</i> (Oyster)
<i>Majja</i>	<i>Lauha</i> (incinerated iron), <i>Vasa</i> (fat), <i>Majja</i> (bone marrow)
<i>Shukra</i>	<i>Atmagupta (Mucuna prurita)</i> ,and <i>Vajikara</i> (Aphrodisiac) preparations

DISCUSSION

Long working hours, night shifts, unhealthy dietary habits and work related stress have become an identity of this modern era. Such kind of schedule some way or in the other, disturbs physical as well as mental status. In such life style related problems, *Rasayana* plays an important role in preventive as well as health promotive aspect. *Rasayana* though described in ancient *Ayurvedic* classics around 5000 years ago, but have very admirable scientific concept behind them.

Following consideration can be taken to validate *Rasayana* therapy on deductive grounds -

- Nutraceutical action – Nutraceutical, a portmanteau the words “nutrition” and “pharmaceutical”, is a food or food product that provides health and

medical benefits, including the prevention and treatment of disease²¹. *Rasayana* provide adequate nutrition to every cell or tissue of body. They increase plasma nutrient value thus execute great nutraceutical action. This action of *Rasayana* drugs was evident in P.Bansal *et al*²².

- Anti- Oxidant action - Oxidative stress leads to many pathophysiological conditions in the body. Some of these include neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease, gene mutations and cancers, chronic fatigue syndrome, fragile X syndrome, heart and blood vessel disorders, atherosclerosis, heart failure, heart attack and

inflammatory diseases²³. 70% methalcoholic extract of *Withania somnifera* (Ashwagandha) has possibility as an antioxidant and free radical scavenging agent²⁴.

- Adaptogenic action— Natural herb products that supplement the body's ability to deal with stressors such as anxiety, fatigue, or trauma are called adaptogens²⁵. *Sida cordifolia* (Bala) have significant adaptogenic and anti-stress activity²⁶.
- Immunomodulatory effect – Our immune systems have connections with numbers of other organs and can directly or indirectly influence the action of many other organs, including the brain. *Rasayana* drugs like *Emblica officinalis* (Amla), *Tinospora cordifolia* (Guduchi) and *Withania somnifera* (Ashwagandha) have significant immunomodulatory action²⁷.
- Geno-protective action –Mutation is damage to DNA and RNA genomes and they may also trigger fatal diseases like cancer. *Rasayana* when used in its preventive aspect (in early or middle age) may intercept such changes in our genetic pattern by enhancing immunological

responses and resistance of DNA to oxidative challenge. Geno-protective action of *chyavanprasha Rasayana* is found by yadav *et al*²⁸.

- Nootropic action - *Medhya Rasayana* have nootropic action and useful in degenerative disorders of brain, like Senile Dementia and Alzheimer's. This *Rasayana* also corrects cognitive dysfunction and preventing the disease in progression. The Bacosides identified in *Brahmi* significantly improved the acquisition, consolidation and retention in the shock motivated brightness discrimination response in rats. Bacosides also enhanced the protein kinase activity in hippocampus²⁹. An aqueous extract of *Glycyrrhiza glabra* significantly enhanced dendritic arborization, dendritic intersection and have dendritic growth stimulating properties³⁰.
- Psychological well being - Behavioral conducts or mental hygiene is the effective preventive principles for the psychological disorders. *Achara Rasayana*, as described previously includes various conducts, behavior, do and

don'ts which give better social acceptance to a person. Thus, *Acharya Rasayana* improves psycho-neuro health of a community.

CONCLUSION

Nourishment of each and every cell or tissue of the body is the prime function of

Rasayana. They provide immunity, strength and vitality to a person. Unhealthy life style results in inadequate nutrition, oxidative stress and early ageing. In current scenario, use of *Rasayana* especially in early and middle age accordingly may help in minimizing and preventing life style disorders.

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