CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF RASAYAN

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INTRODUCTION:
Ayurveda science is related to various aspects of life. It is regarded by the philosophers as the most meritorious of Sciences, because in it are laid the principles of happy, unhappy, wholesome and unwholesome life. It teaches mankind what constitutes their good in both the worlds. A happy life is free from bodily or mental ailments, is endowed with youth, strength, and virility, and is possessed of multifarious and delightful amenities accruing from great wealth. A life contrary to this is deemed unhappy. The life of a person is wholesome (hitaayu) if he is a well wisher, truth loving, of scholarly attitude, scientific, is not negligent, is devoted to austerity, knowledge, is endowed with spiritual insight, contemplative of good in this world and the next and is gifted with memory and understanding. Thus hitaayu and sukhaayu are conducive to psychosomatic equipoise. Such individual is expected to achieve the ultimate aim of life, Purushaarth chatushtaya (virtue, wealth, enjoyment and salvation). Moreover among the three supreme desires (life, wealth, heaven),

ABSTRACT
Rasayan therapy is one of the most prominent components of Ayurvedic medicine. The term Rasayan essentially refers to nourishment or nutrition. Rasayan remedies act essentially on nutrition dynamics and rejuvenate the body and psyche. The problems of health due to modernization can be solved by increasing resistance against diseases and psychological improvement by implementing Rasayan Therapy. The answer to prevent premature ageing also lies in Rasayan Therapy. As this important branch of acquaintance is not much in practice, comprehensive efforts are needed to revive this useful discipline of Ayurveda for the welfare of humanity. The article encompass, general introduction, historical review, exhaustive description of Rasayan Tantra in various ancient texts, biological effects of Rasayan along with an attempt to evaluate the relevance and validity of the same in modern times.

Keywords: Rasayan, nutrition, premature ageing
desire to lead a long and healthy life (Praneshana) is the foremost, as other desires are fulfilled only by a healthy individual. This fact was so much emphasized by ancient sages that they named the very first names of their samhitagranthas as “Deerghamjivitiya adhayaya” and “aayushakaameeya addhayaya” wherein the measures to gain a longer and healthier life are enumerated.

Diseases are the destroyer of health and cause physical and psychological pain. One should never experience this pain, remained the first and foremost motto ‘svasthasya svasthaye rakshanam’ of this holistic science. Acharyas have emphasized much on it by quoting many references stressing on the vision to implement the dietary habits and other means to maintain the normal health and prophylaxis against diseases. Diseases are the destroyer of health and cause physical and psychological pain. One should never experience this pain, remained the first and foremost motto ‘svasthasya svasthaye rakshanam’ of this holistic science. Acharyas have emphasized much on it by quoting many references stressing on the vision to implement the dietary habits and other means to maintain the normal health and prophylaxis against diseases. Diseases are the destroyer of health and cause physical and psychological pain. One should never experience this pain, remained the first and foremost motto ‘svasthasya svasthaye rakshanam’ of this holistic science. Acharyas have emphasized much on it by quoting many references stressing on the vision to implement the dietary habits and other means to maintain the normal health and prophylaxis against diseases. Diseases are the destroyer of health and cause physical and psychological pain. One should never experience this pain, remained the first and foremost motto ‘svasthasya svasthaye rakshanam’ of this holistic science. Acharyas have emphasized much on it by quoting many references stressing on the vision to implement the dietary habits and other means to maintain the normal health and prophylaxis against diseases. Diseases are the destroyer of health and cause physical and psychological pain. One should never experience this pain, remained the first and foremost motto ‘svasthasya svasthaye rakshanam’ of this holistic science. Acharyas have emphasized much on it by quoting many references stressing on the vision to implement the dietary habits and other means to maintain the normal health and prophylaxis against diseases. Diseases are the destroyer of health and cause physical and psychological pain. One should never experience this pain, remained the first and foremost motto ‘svasthasya svasthaye rakshanam’ of this holistic science. Acharyas have emphasized much on it by quoting many references stressing on the vision to implement the dietary habits and other means to maintain the normal health and prophylaxis against diseases. Diseases are the destroyer of health and cause physical and psychological pain. One should never experience this pain, remained the first and foremost motto ‘svasthasya svasthaye rakshanam’ of this holistic science. Acharyas have emphasized much on it by quoting many references stressing on the vision to implement the dietary habits and other means to maintain the normal health and prophylaxis against diseases.

Today is the era of erroneous lifestyle in which people are not able to follow the rules of healthy and happy living due to unawareness or due to their personal, social or professional obligations. Therefore they encounter a number of diseases, the very basis of which has been explained by Acharya Charaka in the precise description of Gramya Aahar. All these factors are still prevalent today and cause premature ageing and a number of diseases. Gramya aahar is the intake of substandard diet, viruddha, vidahi, abhishyandi diets and abandoning the rules of dietetics as described in texts. Moreover, performing excessive and irregular exercise, not controlling the impulses of greed, fear, anger, infatuation etc. are also included in Gramya schedule. Due to these factors nourishing fluid of good quality is not produced, Strotoavrodha is manifested, therefore nutrition of further dhatus is also impaired and imbalance in doshas occurs, which makes the person susceptible for sufferings of various dhatus and ojokshaya. Hence the person becomes abode of psychological and physical illness along with signs of premature ageing and is unable to enjoy the full span of life. To deal all these consequences Ayurveda was once again propagated by Lord Indra with the aim of promotion of longevity, alleviation of old age and diseases so as to enjoy the full span o life. Therefore Rasayan therapy (Rejuvenation therapy) was introduced. This therapy is compared with the ambrosia of gods, and is accepted as a tool to maintain psychosomatic health as well as salvation. This therapy is so much essential that it became an inseparable part “RASAYAN TANTRA” of Ashtang Ayurveda. This branch deals with the measures of preventing premature ageing, delaying of normal ageing process and sustaining young age for prolonged duration.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES: (1) To explore the classical Ayurveda and allied literature for understanding the fundamental concept of Rasayan Therapy and its benefits. (2) To identify the practical utility of Rasayan Therapy for the welfare of human beings in present era.

MATERIALS & METHODS: Classical Ayurveda texts, modern literature and journals pertaining to Rasayan Therapy were analyzed for comprehensive understanding of concept of Rasayan Therapy, its historical review, types, mode of action, benefits and uses.

REVIEW & DISCUSSION: HISTORICAL REVIEW OF RASAYAN:

A survey of the ancient literature traces the concept of Rasayan Therapy as back as the vedic ages. Although a systematic description is unavailable still existence of similar thoughts in vedic literature are en-
Rasayan in Vedic Periods: Vedas are the basic and main source of knowledge for Indians and are considered as the oldest literature. The Vedas have seriously considered the problems of ageing and its prevention. It has been the cherished wish of human race to achieve long life and to live at least for hundred years ‘Jivam sharada shatam’ in perfect health. In Atharva veda clear description is available about the desire of human beings to become “Ajara” and “Amara” i.e. to attain healthful longevity which is possible with the administration of Rasayan Therapy. Beshaja, Rohini is believed to have life enhancing property. A number of aushadhis having longevity effect to promote the health and life span (Rasayan effect). These medicines include, Jivala, Navarisha, Jivanti, Traamana, sahmana and sahaswati. One can get rid of death by use of these drugs.

Puranika kala: Purana are supposed to be old literatures delivered by ancient sages based on Vedas. In Garud purana vivid description is available from chapters 146 to 200. Agni Purana contains description of Sidha Aushadhani (278) and Sarva Roga harani Aushadhani (279). There is description of “MritSanjivani” in Agnipurana(285)\(^7\). Reference is available in Matsya purana 3/6-8 that Acharya Kashayap gained long life with the administration of Rasayan.

Rasayan in Samhita Kala: Detailed description of rasayan therapy is available in Brihattrayi, Laghutrayi and other books belonging to this period.

Rasayan in Charaka Samhita: The 1st chapter of chikitsa sthan is devoted to Rasayan Therapy, which indicates the importance of rasayan therapy as acknowledged by acharya charaka due to its marvelous effects and also having role in alleviation of diseases. Acharya charaka has described various Rasayan Yoga viz. as 6 yogas in Ch.Chi 1-1, 37 yogas in Ch.Chi 1-2, 16 yogas in Ch.Chi 1-3, 4 Rasayan yogas in Ch. Chi. 1-4. It shows that at that time maintenance of health was the priority for which Rasayan therapy was at its peak.

Rasayan in Sushrut Samhita: Sushruta has described Rasayan in chikitsa sthan in four chapters i.e. from 27th to 30\(^{th}\) chapter, which indicates that Rasayan therapy was not emphasized much by Acharya Sushruta. This is probably due to the fact Sushruta Samhita is primarily dealing with surgical discipline. He has given comprehensive, systematic and scientific classification of Rasayan therapy. New Rasayan drugs and yogas have been added by Acharya Sushruta.

Rasayan In Vagbhatta Samhita: The description of Rasayan Therapy in last chapters of Uttara tantra i.e. 49\(^{th}\) chapter of Ashtang Samgraha and 39\(^{th}\) of Ashtang hridaya indicates the fact that at that time Rasayan therapy was less admired, as aim of curing the diseases would have been more essential. The description of Rasayan resembles close to Charaka Samhita. Definition, types, modes of administration, age of administration and various Rasayan yogas have been described in detail.

Numerous details of Rasayan therapy is available in Sharngadhar Samhita Purva khand 4\(^{th}\) chapter, Kalpa sthan of Kasyapa samhita, in Chikitsa kalika written by Testacharya etc.

Rasayan Therapy in Modern Era: Today, reprehensible food habits, erroneous lifestyle, stress, environmental pollution etc. are
exerting awful effects on human beings. Thus they are susceptible to develop premature ageing and various disorders. Therefore to get rid of these harmful effects, Rasayan therapy is coming in consideration. It has been proved scientifically that most Rasayan Drugs are antistress and adaptogenic in nature besides having immunomodulator effects. Moreover the therapy is emerging as geriatric medicine nowadays.

**ETYMOLOGICAL DERIVATION:**

The term Rasayan is a compound word comprising of two words- ‘Rasa’ & ‘Ayan’. Rasa is derived from the verb root “rasa” in the sense of gati (movement) and thus rasa is so called as it moves constantly. The term Rasa has different commodities and it may mean the sap, juice, essence, best or finest. In this context the first word Rasa means the pure and minutest essence of foods of various types e.g. five (according to predominance of mahabhutas), four (lickabe, soft, hard foods), six types (madhur, amla, lavana, katu, tikta, kashaya), two types (according to virya-sheeta and ushana), when taken according to the rules prescribed under code of healthy diet, when well digested by tejas. This pure essence has the ability to pass into minute channels hence it pervades the entire body. Due to liquidity it circulates and saturates persons of all ages, promotes the growth and development of body tissues & sustains the well formed dhatus.

The other word constituiting rasayan is Ayan. In present context of rasayan, the word Ayan has the sense of attainment. Thus the term Rasayan is a compound word which denotes the process /ways/means of attaining ahaara rasa of good quality for the body.

**DEFINITION OF RASAYAN:**

One can find may different definitions of Rasayan in different texts but they all indicate same connotation. Thus Rasayan is a therapy which bestows excellent rasa, which maintains youth, prevents premature ageing, delays normal ageing process, makes the person free from diseases and thus enhances life span, intellect and strength.

**NEED OF RASAYAN:**

Ayurveda has classified and studied the diseases from different viewpoints. Among them Svabhava Bala Pravritta (natural) diseases are Kshudha (hunger), Pipasa (thirst), Nidra (sleep), Jara (ageing) and Mrityu (death). Though these cannot be cured, yet to manage these maladies, particularly jara (ageing), Rasayan therapy has a potential role. Acharya Chakrapani also opines that though naturally occurring diseases cannot be cured by conventional treatment, only Rasayan therapy has the endowment of treating these sufferings by citing the example of sage Chyavan of becoming young again after following the regime of Rasayana. In this era of wrong dietary habits and abnormal lifestyle, Acharya Dalhana, has made its use mandatory to enjoy the full span of life. Moreover this therapy also strengthens the mind with its best qualities which facilitate the person to possess psychological well being and to achieve the salvation.

**MODE OF ACTION:**

It has been explained by Acharya Dalhan on the basis of Rasa, Guna, Veerya, vipaka, prabhava of the rasayan drugs. When rasayan drugs of different rasas are taken, they are digested by jathragni followed by bhutagni. During this phase normal vata, pitta and kapha are produced along with pure saara part i.e. Ahaara rasa.
This qualitative Rasa produces pure Rasa dhatu, which then continues the chain of production of other rakta dhatus with the help of respective dhatwagni upto ojas formation. Therefore well formed dhatus keep on nourishing the body till they are taken, e.g. Rasa provides contentment and saturation & nourishes the blood, rakta generates clarity in complexion & nourishes the medas, medas gives rise to unctuous material, sweat & firmness & nourishes bones, asthi supports the body & nourishes majja, majja provides unctuous, strength, nourishes shukra and fills up bones, shukra provides valour, pleasure, physical strength, exhilaration and is meant for reproduction

There are some Rasayan drugs which act at the level of Rasa by improving the nutritional value of the poshaka rasa which helps to obtain the best quality of dhatu viz. Shtavari, bala, atibala etc. Some Rasayan drugs act at the level of agni and strotas by improving digestion and metabolism and microcirculation & thereby inducing the rejuvenating effect. Drugs resulting in unimpaired agni are pippali, haritaki, chitraka, and those acting at the level of agni are pippali, rason and haritaki etc.

Thus Rasayan therapy works at the level of Rasa (nutrition), Agni (Digestion & metabolism), Strotamsi (microcirculation) enabling the organism to procure the best qualities of different dhatus. Prabhava of Rasayan drugs results in achievement of certain divine effects.

**TYPES OF RASAYAN:**

**According to management schedule**

1. **Kutipraveshika** i.e. the patient is given Rasayan therapy inside Trigarbha kuti (indoor management). Acharya has considered this therapy the better one.

2. **Vataatapika** i.e. the patient is given Rasayan therapy on outdoor basis. Few vataatapika yogas are Sheetodaka, milk, haritaki yoga, Amalaki svarasa, amlaki churna.

3. **Dronipraveshika Rasayan:** It is a specialized procedure in which a Droni prepared from green wood of palash smeared with sneha is used to keep the person, who has taken the juice of “Divya rasayan” (celestial drugs), which have wonderful effect on body. Some of these drugs are brahma, suvarchala, adityaparni, nari, soma, padma etc.

**According to Specific Indication:**

1. **Kamya Rasayan** (promoter of normal health)
   a. **Prana kamya:** Rasayan therapy aiming to fulfill desires of vitality and longevity e.g. Triphala rasayan, haritaki rasayan.
   b. **Medhakamya:** Promoter of intellect e.g. Brahmi, Shankhpushpi.
   c. **Shreekamya:** promoter of complexion and lusture, fortune.

2. **Naimittika:** Rasayan Therapy used as an adjunct of specific therapy in certain diseases e.g. Shilajatu in Prameha, bhallataka in Amavata.

3. **Ajastrika:** Regular use of nutritious foods for the endorsement of health e.g. ksheergritaabhyas.

**According to mode of Action:**

1. **Samshodhan:** The drugs used for the purpose of purification of body by the processes of Vaman, Virechana etc. Thus vitiated doshas enrooted out of body ultimately result in rejuvenation of body e.g. Soma Rasayan.

2. **Samshamana:** In this type, vitiated doshas are not expelled from body but get pacified inside the body e.g. Nagbala, guduchi, Triphala, amlaki rasayan etc.
Achara Rasayan: It describes the mode of living, behavior and conduct as follows;

Being truthful, having control over mental faculties of ego, anger etc., peaceful, steady and stable, friendly and respectable attitude towards elderly people, teachers, Brahmans and gods, kindness towards all animals, regular eating and sleeping habits, leading the sensory organs and mind towards spiritualism, good conduct, philanthropy, abstinance from jealousy and violence, firm belief in god, regular use of ghrita and milk. Such persons get the best results of Rasayan therapy. Acharya Sushruta has added continuous study, taking meals after proper digestion of previous meals, appropriate evacuation of natural urges and not performing excessive physical exertion as means of attaining Rasayan qualities.

Medhaya Rasayan: Medha is sharp and penetrating intellect, unhindered althrough and is associated with excellent memory. Certain Rasayan drugs especially influencing Medha and thus promoting psychological competence are called Medhya Rasayan. These are Swarasa of Mandukaparni, Powder of yashtimadhu, with milk, guduchi swarasa, Paste of Shankhapushpi, Bakuchi, vacha. Acharya sushruta has appraised the effects of Medhaya rasayan as having appearance of god like effulgence (Brahmavarchasi), a very fine retentive power (Shrutdhara, shrutninadi, shrutnigadi), very fine receptive power of sense organs (taksharyadarhanam) and attainment of enhanced (100yrs/300yrs/500yrs) span of life.

Studies on Popular medhya drugs like Shankhapushpi, Mandukaparni, yashtimadhu, guduchi, ashwagandha have shown that these drugs act like mild to moderate anxiolytic agents and adaptogens and posses varying degrees of psychotopic actions.

SUITABILITY OF RASAYAN:

People afflicted from physical and psychological impurities are not suitable for rasayana therapy, as they are not benefitted by its use. A person with a clear and controlled mind derives the best out of this therapy. Acharya Sushrutha has contraindicated the use of therapy to persons with awful psyche, lazy, poor, addicted, people performing sinful activities and not following the commands of physician. Considering this aspect Acharyas have advised Samshodhana therapy as a Purvakarma for sharirika and manasika dosha shudhi to flourish the person with the best qualities of therapy. Haritakyadi churna has been described to achieve this aim.

AGE OF INITIATION OF RASAYAN THERAPY:

The goal of life is to die young as late as possible (Astle montegue). Rasayan therapy is primarily aimed to prevent premature ageing, handle the sequele of normal ageing and thus enabling the person to encompass the benefits of complete span of life and to boast painless death. So it is necessary that it should be started as early as possible so that best nourishing fluid produced which is able to permeate the various cells of body thereby ensues in growth of Rasadi dhatus of paramount quality. As samshodhan therapy is the prerequisite of rasayan therapy hence acharyas have advised it to start preferably in young age and if not started at that age then at the middle age.

OFFERINGS OF RASAYAN THERAPY:

Rejuvenation therapy has following unimaginable and wonderful effects as described in classical texts:

Physical effects: Longevity, perfect health, youthful age, successful words (vakasiddhi), excellent lusture and complexion, optimum
physical and sensory strength, cures morbid sleep, drowsiness, physical and mental fatigue, laziness and weakness. It balances tridoshas, cures slothness of muscles, stimulates digestion and metabolism.

**Psychological effects:** One can attain excellent memory, intelligence, intellect, excellent retention ability (shrutdhara).

**Divine effects:** Attainment of moksha, reversal of age, immortality, bring good fortune, prosperity, and enhanced life span upto ten thousand yrs.

**BIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF RASAYAN THERAPY:** Few herbs have been explored for their specific biological effects on different dimensions of health.

(a) **Anabolic effects:** Herbs like Gambhari, have shown a positive role in improving nitrogen balance and thus promoting tissue building.

(b) **Antistress adaptogenic:** Pharmacological investigations on drugs like Ashwagandha & shilajita point to this unique biological effect of Rasayan drugs. Accordingly, a drug with Rasayan quality can benefit the user in two distinct ways. In one hand, it can neutralize the negative effects of stress on physiology and restore homeostasis i.e. antistress effect and on the other hand, a long term administration of such drugs may enhance one’s own tolerance levels and thus help the person to cope up with stress in a better way i.e. adaptogenic effect.

(c) **Immunomodulatory effect:** Immunity is another biological phenomenon with varied implications. On one hand it guards the body as a whole from invasion by microbes & on contrary, immune system under selected circumstances may go berserk & can strt doubting our own tissues & invade them ruthlessly i.e. autoimmune response. Rasayan herbs are continuously been explored for their effect on immune system. At one hand they work to enhance immune functions and make us firm from deep within or the other hand they might pacify on angry immunity cell to be in its limits.

(d) **Nootropic effects:** As Acharyas were fascinated with the idea of enhancing mental capabilities, so we come across a specified term, Medhya Rasayan which is a specific class of drugs having effect on psychological traits. Brahma and Shankhpushpi have been investigated for their effects on memory and learning abilities. Such investigations testify the acclaimed effects to some extent.

(e) **Antioxidant effects:** Today, oxygen free radicals are implicated in a wide range of diseases starting from minor allergies to cancers. Rasayan drugs are now discovered to help the physiology in overcoming such oxidative injury by enhancing the enzymatic defense mechanisms of body. While most of Rasayan drugs exhibit the antioxidant activity, they are likely to have some kind of tissue specificity.

(f) **Antiageing effect:** Administration of Rasayan drugs cause prevention of ageing. There have been a few investigations in this direction. Available evidences indicated that Rasayan drugs could influence the secretion of a hormone DHEA, the deficiency of which has been implicated in the process of ageing.

**CONCLUSION:**

To live a long and healthy life is every individual’s wish. Due to changing lifestyle and thus not able to follow the rules of dietetics human beings are forced to age prematurely with many psychological and physical illnesses. To deal all these consequences in Ayurveda, Rasayan therapy (Rejuvenation therapy) was introduced.
Rasayan is a therapy which bestows excellent rasa which ultimately results in promotion of longevity, alleviation of old age and diseases so as to enjoy the full span of life. Rasayan therapy works at the level of Rasa (nutrition), Agni (Digestion & metabolism), Strotamsi (microcirculation) enabling the organism to procure the best qualities of different dhatus. Prabhava of Rasayan Drugs results in achievement of certain divine effects as well. Various types of rasayan therapy have been described in texts on the basis of contents, usage and scope. Therefore, it is necessary that it should be started as early as possible so as to obtain the Rasadi dhatus of paramount excellence, thus enabling the person to enjoy the full span of life along with a symptom less old age.

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