

URJASKARA – RASAYANA FACTORS IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a vedic science of life evolved from the *Atharvaveda* and propagating the holistic and integrated approach to understand *svastha* (healthy person) and *svaasthya* (health). A healthy person is known by the vigor or *Urja* he carries in himself to sustain life, to survive the struggles of existence, and ultimately coming out as the best creature of this universe. The diets, regimens, practices enriching the *Urja* of a person are known as *urjaskara*. *Urjaskara* or *Rasayana* means causing strength of the body, sense organs, mind and soul i.e. boosting of *bala* or rejuvenating the vitality. Man has always wished to live an immortal and incredible life like Gods. But *Ojas* depleting living conditions of body, mind and climate i.e. *vayu*, *jala*, *desha* and *kaala* have deprived him of quality life and extracting the stigma of life from all the subsequent life promoting agencies inducing stress and resentment all over the world. In such adverse conditions of distressed life when auto immune diseases, immune deficient diseases and Allergic diseases are on rise, *Ayurveda* is the only boon that can play an active role in the public health services by *urjaskara* or *rasayana* therapy to improve the quality of life i.e. *deerghayu* and *sukhayu*.

Keywords: *Urjaskara*, *Rasayana*, *Ojas*, *bala*, Immunomodulators

INTRODUCTION

He who makes use of this *Rasayana* (Rejuvenation) therapy, according to the prescribed procedure, not merely enjoys long life in this world, but also after death enjoys the auspicious life of the *devas* and *rishis* and gets submerged in immutable *Brahmand*.¹

Urja term is applied in the context of prolongation and promotion of life (*jivane*), augmentation of *bala*, Energy, enthusiasm etc. in various Sanskrit *koshas*. So the substances or drugs those are meant for longevity and enhanced efficiency of the Immune system by fighting against all diseases or reducing the recurrences in episodic diseases are known as *urjaskara*. *Urjaskara* or

rasayana is that which provides optimum quality of the body tissues due to which it provides both physical and mental health, prevents ageing and disease thus enables to live for a longer period of youthfulness.

Classical Review

Acharya Caraka has clearly mentioned the *urjaskara* as the type of *bheshaja* (medicine) for healthy persons² in the first chapter of *cikitsa sthana* i.e. *Abhayamalaki rasayanam* Ist pada of *rasayana* as *svasthasya urjaskaram kinchit*. *Cakrapani* has simplified by commenting that in a healthy person it alleviates natural ailments like *jara* (ageing) and replenishes the lost *shukra* because of sexual indulgence and ultimately increases essence part in body³.

The first part clearly reflects the functioning of *rasayana* where as the second part denotes *vajikarana*. *Kinchidartasya* is for the alleviation of diseases primarily and in general. Both the functions i.e. *urjaskara* and *roga shamana* are carried by both the types of drugs but the name specify the chief function. Even some examples are quoted w.s.r.to some systemic diseases like *Pandu* and *kshatkseena*. In *Pandu roga Acharya Caraka* has prescribed *yogaraja* and in *kshataksheena*, *sarpiguda* has been chosen as best drug⁴. Both these drugs serve dual purpose i.e. alleviation of disease associated with rejuvenation. *Acharya Yogendranatha sena* has defined it as *bala varnadyupachaya krita*.

Vagbhata has also followed the same classification by accepting two types of *bheshaja - urjaskara* and *rogaghna*⁵. *Urjaskara* is again of two categories, *rasayana* and *vajikarana*⁶. In the present context *rasayana* is the recommended reference. The medicines belonging to this category invigorate a healthy person. Equally they are effective in the cure of many diseases as is evident from the instances scattered in the classics. In the ancient times this Rejuvenation therapy was equally beneficial as ambrosia was to Gods and nectar was for serpents⁷. This miraculous therapy made them free from old age, weakness, disease

and death and they lived for thousands of years⁸.

So in the present context type of rejuvenating drugs are concerned those have properties to eradicate disease as well. *Urja* or *bala* or *vyadhikshamattva* (Immunity) is the effect of substratum termed as *ojas* in the body. So *urjaskara* drugs increase the *ojas* in the body by attainment of excellent *dhatu rasa, rakta* etc. and this can be visualized in the form of *vyadhikshamattva* (immunity) i.e. resistance against diseases.

For the purpose various *rasayana* and *ojovardhaka* remedies are described in *Ayurveda*. These drugs act locally as well as systemically. Among these important ones are as following: *Brahma rasayana*⁹, *Cyavanaprasha*¹⁰, *Aamalaki*¹¹, *Haritakyadi yoga*¹², *Nagabala rasayana*¹³, *Bala rasayana*¹⁴, *Atibala rasayana*¹⁵, *Amrita rasayana*¹⁶, *Abhaya rasayana*¹⁷, *Mukta rasayana*¹⁸, *Jeevanti rasayana*¹⁹, *Shatavari rasayana*²⁰, *Mandukparni*²¹, *Compounds of Bhallataka*²², *Aindra rasayana*²³, *Pippali vardhamana*²⁴, *Triphala rasayana*²⁵. Besides *jeevaniya*²⁶ (invigorators), *brihaniya*²⁷ (nourishing), *balya*²⁸ (strength promoters), *vayasthapana*²⁹ (Rejuvenators) decoctions are prescribed in *Caraka samhita*. Various drug components of these decoctions are as following:

S.No.	<i>Jeevaniya</i>	<i>Brihaniya</i>	<i>Balya</i>	<i>Vayasthapana</i>
1.	<i>Jeevaka</i>	<i>Ksheerini</i> <i>Mimusops hexadra</i>	<i>Aindri</i> <i>Citrullus colocynthis</i>	<i>Amrita</i> <i>Tinospora cordifolia</i>
2.	<i>Meda</i>	<i>Ashwagandha</i> <i>Withania</i> <i>somnifera</i>	<i>Atirasa</i> <i>Asparagus</i> <i>racemosus</i>	<i>Dhatri</i> <i>Emblica officinalis</i>
3.	<i>Mahameda</i>	<i>Kakoli</i>	<i>Rishyaprokta</i> <i>Teramnus labialis</i>	<i>Mukta, Pearl</i>
4.	<i>Kakoli</i>	<i>ksheerakakoli</i>	<i>Payasya</i> <i>Ipomoea paniculata</i>	<i>Shveta, White variety of</i> <i>Clitoria ternatea</i>

5.	<i>Ksheerakakoli</i>	<i>Vatyayani Sida rhombifolia</i>	<i>Ashwagandha Withania somnifera</i>	<i>Jeevanti Leptadenia reticulata</i>
6.	<i>Mudgaparni Phaseolus trilobus</i>	<i>bhadraudané Sida cordifolia</i>	<i>Sthira Desmodium gengeticum</i>	<i>Atirasa Asparagus racemosus</i>
7.	<i>Mashaparni Teramnus labialis</i>	<i>Bhadraudani Thespesia lampes</i>	<i>Rohini Picrorrhiza kurroa</i>	<i>Mandukaparni Centella asiatica</i>
8.	<i>Jeevanti Leptadenia reticulate</i>	<i>Payasya Ipomoea paniculata</i>	<i>Bala Sida cordifolia</i>	<i>Sthira Desmodium gengeticum</i>
9.	<i>Madhuka Glycerrhiza glabra</i>	<i>Rishyagandha</i>	<i>Atibala A variety of sida cordifolia</i>	<i>Punarnava Boerhaavia diffusa</i>

Acharya Dalhana has categorized these *rasayana* into three classes in his commentary as *kaamyam*, *naimittikam* and *ajasrikam*³⁰. *Kaamyam rasayana* are used to get the desired effects like longevity, beauty etc. *Naimittikam* type of drugs are administered with consideration of specific disease. *Ajasrikam* is the category that incorporates a large group of dietary substances which we take or must be taken for the sustenance of life in a better and rejuvenative way³¹. *Acarya Charaka* has supported this category by emphasizing on regular intake of those substances which is conducive to the maintenance of good health and prevent attack of diseases in future³². Diets are considered as representatives of *prana* in the body because of their life sustaining properties³³. *Acarya Charaka* has repeatedly quoted the terms *hita*, *satmya*, *pathya* etc. with reference to diets³⁴.

Also there are mentioned the rejuvenating effects of *Achara rasayana* (good conduct)³⁵. This particular type of *rasayana* reflects the internal *Adhyatmika* (spiritual) constitution of a person with

certain noble qualities following a scripturally prescribed way of life with multifaceted approach. Although *Caraka Samhita* is clustered with this type of good conduct in *svastha catushka* and importance of mental well being is scattered at number of places yet this specific reference of *achra rasayana* has strengthened the theory of psycho-somatic constitution.

It is better to use the term *rasayana* regimens than *rasayana* drugs, those incorporate all the wholesome diets, drugs and conduct. Their application increases the *ojas* in the body that further stimulates *bala* or immune system to function in a better and effective way. *Ojas* is defined as the quintessence of the seven *dhatu*s and holds the same position and functions in the body as *bala*³⁶. *Ojas* and *bala* are two terms applied in the classics but carry same meaning and bear an interdependent relationship. *Ojas* is the substance responsible and *bala* the effect seen. Most of the time these are used synonymously³⁷. It is present in all the tissues of body and its complete loss leads to the degeneration of body resulting in death³⁸. Its importance can be derived from the fact that the *tridoshas* in normal proportions are una-

ble to perform functions in an ojas deficient body³⁹. Mental happiness is the chief augmenting force for *ojas*. So mind must be protected from the all kinds of grievances⁴⁰. There must be deliberate maintenance of favorite diets and environment those are pleasing and comfortable for mind⁴¹. *Acarya* has specifically emphasized more intake of *rasayana* and *vajikarana* remedies⁴². Sweet, Unctuous, cold, light, wholesome and others factors those enhance ojas must be prescribed⁴³. Drugs of the *jeevaniya gana*, milk; *mamsa rasa* etc. must be given generously for its augmentation⁴⁴.

Bala is the manifestation of *ojas* as an effect phenomenon and is very clearly defined as synonym of *Ojas* by *Acarya Susruta*⁴⁵. *Caraka* has presented its threefold description⁴⁶ as *Sahajam* or innate - Congenital psycho-somatic strength, *Kaalajam* or Temporal- status of bala in particular seasons and the age of a person⁴⁷. *Visarga kala* and young age are the peak periods for the best of ojas and *Yuktikritam* or Acquired-achieved by the combination of diet and other regimens⁴⁸. This is attained by planned combination of the intake of wholesome food like ghee, meat etc. and other regimens like proper rest, sleep, exercise etc. and also the use of elixirs⁴⁹. Besides there are other Bala Promoting Factors⁵⁰ like *Balavatpurusha deshe janma*, *Balavatpurusha kale janma*, *Sukhashcha kala yoga*, *Beejakshetragunasampacca*, *Aharasampacca*, *Sharirasampacca*, *Satmyasampacca*, *Sattvasampacca*, *Svabhavasansidghishca*, *Yauvanam ca*, *Karma ca*, *Sanharshanceti* i.e. birth in an age of strong men., happy conjunction of time, Qualitative efficacy of seed and soil i.e. sperm ovum and womb, Having quality foods and drinks, having a good body,

Having a higher grade of assimilability, Having a higher stage of mind, Dispensation of nature, Youth, Acts and Cheerfulness are means of increase of strength in a person.

DISCUSSION

In the scientific light the *urjaskara* factors or the *rasayana* can be termed as immunomodulators. Latter are the substances those bring alteration in the status of immune system. This modulation or alteration could be either enhancement or diminution of the immunity. In the present context this term is specifically employed in the former perspective i.e. enhancement. This can also be equally related with the immunotherapy. Immunomodulators can be of natural origin (from plants) or synthetic substances those help regulate or normalize the imbalanced immune system. Natural immunomodulators are less potent than synthetic ones and also less likely to cause side effects. It is assumed that Immunomodulators bind to the IgE antibody thereby preventing from binding to receptor sites on mast cells and basophil cells. Our immune system plays a pivotal role in the pathogenesis of allergic, immune deficient and auto-immune disorders. Modification and balancing such immune responses offer therefore a huge potential for the development of health promotion by immunomodulators. Many ingredients of the drugs interact with the functioning of our immune system. Such interactions may help to balance and stabilize our immune responses and to mitigate immune related physical disorders. On the other hand *rasayana* in particular acts more on the nutritional dynamics rather than pharmacodynamics.

In the recent time research is emphasized more on preventive and promotive aspects of health. As per the

Pubmed information 23 drugs are researched out of which *Withania somnifera* and *Asparagus racemosus* are the most studied *rasayana* plants. It was observed the free radical scavenging activity was most studied in the researches followed by immunomodulatory effects. The disease preventive action of the *Rasayana* drugs is researched by studying the inhibition of free radical stress⁵¹. The studies indicate that *Rasayana* drugs hold the potential for decelerating the ageing process and enhancing the youthfulness and longevity. Their role is also been studied in the management of disease by anti-oxidant approach.

Different modes of *Urja* administration mentioned earlier in the review like good conducive diet, sleep, good personal and social conduct fellowships i.e. *Achara rasayana*, *bala* promoting agencies even in prenatal stages and mind care regimens and many more all put an immunomodulatory effects in the preventive as well as curative stages of a disease.

CONCLUSION

It might be rewarding to investigate the *Ayurvedic* concepts of *rasayana tantra* in terms of modern concepts of immunology. Attempts are being made to examine the immunomodulatory effects of *rasayana* and other *urjaskara* factors. New methodologies should be explored that focus on the nutritional dynamics as the basis of immunomodulatory effect of a *rasayana*. Recent studies on opiates have uncovered the structural basis of neuro-hormone-immune axis and added a new dimension to the understanding of the action of adaptogens/tonics that are very close to *rasayana* drugs of *Ayurveda*. The knowledge of structure and function of chemical constitu-

ents of *Ayurvedic* drugs would give better understanding of the pharmaceutical practices of *Ayurveda*.

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