

**CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF RASAYAN****Kumari Monika**<sup>1</sup>**Meena K.L**<sup>2</sup>**Vardhan Prabhakar**<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup>Ph. D. Scholar, PG Department of Basic Principles National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India<sup>2</sup>Associate Prof & Head, PG Department of Basic Principles National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India<sup>3</sup>Lecturers, PG Department of Shalaky Tantra, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur Rajasthan, India**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 encompasses, 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

**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<sup>1</sup>. Thus *hitaayu* and *sukhaayu* are conducive to psychosomatic equipoise. Such individual is expected to achieve the ultimate aim of life, *Puru-shaarth chatustaya* (virtue, wealth, enjoyment and salvation)<sup>2</sup> Moreover among the three supreme desires (life, wealth, heaven),

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 samhita granthas 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 svaasthaye 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<sup>3</sup>.

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*<sup>4</sup>. 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, grief, 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 *dhatu*s is also impaired and imbalance in *dosha*s occurs, which makes the person sus-

ceptible for sufferings of various *dhatu*s 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 of 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<sup>5</sup>. 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-

countred. The description available in different periods is similar with emphasis on achievement of long and healthy life.

**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<sup>6</sup>. *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)<sup>7</sup>. 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 *Brihatrayi*, *Laghutrayi* and other books belonging to this period.

**Rasayan in Charaka Samhita:** The 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of *chikitsa sthan* is devoted to *Ra-*

*sayan* 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 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, 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<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Ashtang Samgraha* and 39<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>th</sup> chapter, *Kalpa sthan* of *Kashyapa samhita*, in *Chikitsa kalika* written by *Teshtaacharya* etc.

**Rasayan Therapy in Modern Era:** Today, reprehensible food habits, erroneous life style, 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<sup>8</sup>. 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 *dhatu*s.

The other word constituting *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 *ahara rasa* of good quality for the body.

#### DEFINITION OF RASAYAN:

One can find many different definitions of *Rasayan* in different texts but they all indicate same connotation. Thus *Rasayan* is a therapy which bestows excellent *rasa*<sup>9</sup>, 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<sup>10</sup>. *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.<sup>11</sup>

#### MODE OF ACTION:

It has been explained by *Acharya Dalhana* on the basis of *Rasa, Guna, Veerya, vipaka, prabhava* of the *rasayan* drugs<sup>12</sup>. 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 *raktadi 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<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup>

(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*<sup>15</sup>.

(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<sup>16</sup>: (I) **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. *ksheerghritaabhyas*.

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*, *amalaki rasayan* etc.

**Acharya Rasayan**<sup>17</sup>: 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, abstinence from jealousy and violence, firm belief in god, regular use of *ghrita* and *milk*. Such persons get the best results of *Rasayan* therapy. *Acharya Sushrut* 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.

**Medhya Rasaya**: *Medha* is sharp and penetrating intellect, unhindered although 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 *Medhya 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 possess varying degrees of psychotropic 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<sup>18</sup>. *Acharya Sushruta* 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 (Aster Montague). *Rasayan* therapy is primarily aimed to prevent premature ageing, handle the sequelae 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<sup>19</sup>.

### 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<sup>20</sup>, 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<sup>21</sup>.

**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 start 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. *Brahmi* 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. *Ra-*

*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 *dhatu*s. *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 dhatu*s 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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