

CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF RASAYANA**Vinay Ankush pawar**

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is essentially a science, which deals with the philosophy of life. Rasayana tantra is one of the clinical specialties of Ayurveda. It is not only a single drug treatment but also a specialized therapeutic procedure practiced as a major specialty in Indian medicine. Rasayana means the way for attaining excellent Rasa etc. (dhatus). By undergoing through Rasayana method of treatment, an individual draws benefits of longevity, heightened memory, intelligence, health, youthfulness, excellence of luster, complexion & voice, optimum strength of body & senses. As far as Vyadhinashana function of Rasayana dravya is concerned it is not necessary that Rasayana dravya should directly take part into disease destroying process i.e. Samprapti-vighata, rather it enhances the quality of dhatus, thereby helps in arresting the steps of 'Shat-Kriyakala' involved in Samprapti. As dhatus are strong there is no more 'Kha-vaigynya' for sthan-samshraya & Vyakti to take place. In other words Rasayana enhances the 'Prohost Resistance' against diseases. Rasayana dravya achieve these functions by acting at various levels, i.e. Rasadhatu, Agni & Srotas. Rasayana enhances the immunity. The administration of the Rasayana drug enhances the process of longevity through immuno-modulation in terms of resisting the disease process or even arresting the production of the disease caused due to infection.

Keywords: *Rasayana, Immuno-Modulation, Immunity*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, as the term indicates the science of life, as propounded by the sages & developed over the centuries, is not a system specific medicine, but a holistic medicine in all respect. It is a science having neither a beginning nor an end; a divine, all encompassing medical science promoting universal good, an eternal omniscient system, *Ayurveda* worth a lifetime study. *Ayurveda* is the world's most ancient system of medicine dealing with every aspects of human life throughout the thousands of years to maintain the physical, mental & social health (well - being). Moreover its therapies detoxify the body, rejuvenate the cells & promote mental well - being. It is giving proper pathway to the

people, through which one can avail the ultimate goals of life i.e. four *Purusharthas* - *Dharma, Artha, Kama & Moksha*.

It is always being said that 'Prevention is better than cure'. In the same way, the aims of *Ayurveda* are-

- 1) Restoration of health of a healthy person¹
- 2) Treatment of an ill person²

Ayurveda deals with preventive, promotive as well as curative aspects. The latest definition of 'Health' as brought out by WHO is 'Total Physical, mental, social & spiritual well - being & not just absence of a disease' which *Ayurveda* has been preaching over the centuries. According to *Acharya Charaka*, therapeutics is of two

types - the one which can promote strength (& immunity) & the other that alleviates disorders in ailing.³ The former one goes for positive health or for *swasthya - rakshana* i.e. to maintain the physical, mental, social & spiritual well - being of an individual. To pressure this goal, *Ayurveda* proposed a specific therapy called as 'Rasayana therapy'. *Rasayana* forms one of the eight clinical specialties of *Ayurveda* - a well-developed science.⁴ Literally *Rasayana* means the augmentation of *Rasa*, the vital fluid produced by the digestion of food, which sustains the body through strengthening of the *dhatu*s.⁵ It consists of a specialized use of certain drugs which are supposed to

- i) Prevent ageing & impart longevity.
- ii) Impart immunity & body resistance against diseases.
- iii) Improve mental faculties & add vitality & luster to the body.

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, *Rasayana - shastra* is one of the eight clinical specialties of *Ayurveda* & its aims are to increase longevity to hundred years, to increase the power of brain, to improve health & to make a person more active, to remove all morbidity from the body, & to maintain the youth of an individual.⁶ *Acharya Charaka* described 'Rasayana' as initiation of *Chikitsa - Sthana* to prove its major importance in *swasthya - rakshana* (Restoration of health) as well as *Vikara - prashamana* (Treatment of an ill person) of diseased person. *Rasayana* therapy of *Ayurveda* essentially refers to the process of tissue nourishment & rejuvenation. The *Rasayana* effect retards ageing & prolongs life. The *Rasayana* remedies encompass a range of drugs, diets & life - style interventions which promote nutritional status of the body & culminate into formation of good qualities of *dhatu*s.

Immunity or Natural immune response is a physiological reaction executed by the body in order to prevent the disease process or lessen the intensity of disease. One can find the detailed description of immunity in *Charak - Samhita* & its Commentary by *Chakrapanidatta*.⁷ '*Vyadhikshamatwa*' means preventive response of subject to the disease. It can be correlated with the concept of immunity. In the context of various current health problems, leading to impairment of immune system; it becomes the need of a time to study the ancient concept of *Rasayana* to ameliorate the immune system.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

1. To review complete literature on *Rasayana*
2. To re-establish the concept of *Rasayana* therapy as described in ancient treatise & its utility in today's context in correlation with immuno-modulation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Literature: *Charak-samhita* and all available *Ayurvedic* classics, Modern available texts, Magazines, Journals, M.D. dissertations & Research papers

Type of Study: Conceptual (*Saiddhantik*) Study

CONCEPTUAL STUDY:

DEFINITION OF RASAYANA: Therapeutics is of two types - the one which promotes strength (& immunity) in healthy & the other that alleviates disorders in ailing. Thus the drugs are of two kinds-one that goes for positive health & other belongs to the curative group. The group of drugs for positive health is sub-divided into two kinds - one is *Vrushya* or the virilific & the other is *Rasayana* or the vitalizer.⁸ The word '*Prayah*' (mostly) denotes only particularity because both the groups perform both the above functions (promotion of strength including immunity & alleviation of disorders)⁹ *Rasayana*

(promotive treatment) means the way for attaining excellent *Rasa* etc. (*dhatu*)¹⁰

The 'Rasayana' is the drug which destroys aging process & diseases by re-establishing youth & is beneficial for eyes, increases body weight, & acts as a virilific.¹¹ The substance which delays aging process & destroys disease is known as *Rasayana*.¹²

CHARACTERISTICS OF RASAYANA

: By undergoing through the *Rasayana* method of treatment, an individual draws benefits of longevity, heightened memory & intelligence, health, youthfulness, excellence of luster, complexion & voice, optimum strength of body & senses, utterances that always get fulfilled, the reverence of people body glow.¹³ *Rasayana* re-establishes youth, strengthens life & brain powers & is capable of removing diseases.¹⁴

AIMS OF RASAYANA There are two fold aims of *Rasayana* therapy:

- 1) *Jara nashana or Vayasthapana*
- 2) *Vyadhi nashana*

Hence it is important to understand their possible modes of action. As these therapeutic agents and their possible modalities improve both physical and mental faculties and achieve some spiritual benefits as well. Hence it seems that they act on *dhatu* formation process by improving *jatharagni*, thereby improving digestion and produce the best *Rasa dhatu*. The quality of other six *dhatu*s also improves as their respective *dhatwgnis* are also boosted. To achieve this, the *srotas* of all *dhatu*s are also well maintained and are to be kept without any obstructive lesions. Also if any of the *srotas* is congenitally weak or is weakened by a previous disease or by external injuries, this weakness is also to be corrected and the local *Vyadhikshamatwa* (Immunity) of the *srotas* is to be boosted. This ensures formation of the

best *dhatu*s, which in turn produce *oja*, the essence of the best parts of all *dhatu*s. This process enhances strength of the mind. Thereby improves mental faculties. This ensures positive thinking and thereby good actions, which help them, earn respect in the society.

VYADHIKSHAMATVA & IMMUNITY

In this text, it will be quite relevant to know what Ayurveda says about Immunity. One can find detail description of Immunity in Ayurvedic texts. *Chakrapanidatta*, the commentator of *Charak Samhita* vividly defines the *Vyadhikshamatva* (immunity) as the power on the part of the body to prevent the progression of the disease or the powers to successfully resist a developed disease.¹⁵ *Vyadhikshamatva* means to tolerate & fight against disease i.e. to prevent disease & to fight against disease after the disease has already produced. *Chakrapani's* definition is generally applicable to infectious as well as non-infectious diseases. It is definitely stated that all bodies do not have the same power of resistance against all diseases. Individuals with neither obese nor thin bodies, well built & developed *mansa, shonit & asthi dhatu*s, taking food of optimum quality & quantity, strong body & mind are *Vyadhikshama* i.e. they are able to resist any kind of disease & vice – versa.¹⁶ *Ayurveda* believes that if body is kept perfectly healthy & its *bala* is maintained at its best, there can be no chances of falling it a prey to any disease. Contrary to above are able to resist. This resistance to disease is called Immunity. The word 'Immunity' means resistance to a disease because of the formation of humeral antibodies or the development of cellular immunity or both. The word according to Ayurveda is called *Vyadhikshamatva*. *Vyadhikshamatva* is mainly of two types

- 1) **Vyadhibala - Virodhitwa** means that type of resistance which minimizes the force or severity of diseases after the disease has already been produced.
- 2) **Vyadhyutpad - Pratibandhakatwa** means that type of immunity which prevents the production of disease. Under the contrary conditions, there occur contrary results. In this concept, *Charaka* clears the incubation period mild or severe form of disease, acute or otherwise conditions of disease, importance of etiological factors & resistance or immunity also. As far as *Vyadhinashana* function of *Rasayana dravya* is concerned it is not necessary that *Rasayana dravya* should directly take part into disease destroying process i.e. *Samprapti-vighata*, rather it enhances the quality of *dhatu*s, thereby helps in arresting the steps of '*Shat-Kriyakala*' involved in *Samprapti*. As *dhatu*s are strong there is no more '*Kha-vaigunya*' for *sthan-samshraya* & *Vyakti* to take place. In other words *Rasayana* enhances the 'Prohost Resistance' against diseases. *Rasayana dravya* achieve these functions by acting at various levels, i.e. *Rasadhatu*, *Agni* & *Srotas*.

DISCUSSION

Rasayana is one of the eight clinical specialties of *Ayurveda* - a well developed science. *Rasayana Chikitsa* is beneficial to increase the excellent quality of *dhatu*. *Rasayana* therapy essentially refers to the process of tissue nourishment & rejuvenation. *Rasayana* has also the property to cure the diseases. This may be possible by increasing the *Prashasta Rasa* & the other *Dhatu* & eliminating the *Khavaigunya* of that particular *srotas* or organ (*Sroto-Vaigunya*). The definition of *Rasayana - Tantra* in the *Sushruta - Samhita* is not so elaborate, though one finds

an appropriate classification of *Rasayana* in *Dalhana's* commentary. One finds an emphasis on '*Naimittika Rasayana*' described as adjuvant to specific curative treatment of certain diseases. The practice of maintaining positive health & longevity through *Rasayana* therapy was most popular in the period of *Charaka* when the problem of disease in the community was not so acute. With the passage of time when occurrence of diseases became more frequent due to urbanization of the population, it was but natural for the medical writers to deal more thoroughly with therapeutics than the preventive & positive health aspects of medicine. Thus '*Rasayana Tantra*' as an independent discipline has suffered a phase of involution during the post - *Charaka* period. To maintain a positive health, *Vyadhishamatva* plays a vital role which can be correlated with Immunity. *Rasayana* enhances the immunity. The administration of the *Rasayana* drug connate the process of longevity through immuno-modulation in terms of resisting the disease process or even arresting the production of the disease caused due to infection.

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