ROLE OF RASAYANA IN LONGEVITY: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

In this world longevity and old age are accompanied with a variety of health challenges and population studies indicate that elder people will use three to five times more healthcare services compared to the younger population. Ayurveda has two aims i.e. prevention and promotion of health. Rasayana may be employed for fulfilling both of them. Health promotion, disease prevention and rejuvenation approaches are used in this system of medicine through dietary and therapeutic means and both approaches can slow aging and invigorate functions of the body’s organs. The Rasayanas are rejuvenators, nutritional supplements and possess strong antioxidant activity. Rasayana refurbish the neuronal, endocrinal and immune systems are considered to prevent ageing, re-establish youth, strengthen life, brain power and prevent diseases, thus enhancing bodily resistance to all kinds of injury. The main purpose of Rasayana therapy is to impede the aging process and to delay the degenerative process also known to promote positive health and longevity. Rasayana is one of the comprehensive disciplines of Ayurveda, which comprises a specialized use of herbs, herb mineral formulations, food articles. Thus a plan for Rasayana therapy right from birth shall be introduced in routine immunization schedule.

Keywords Ayurveda, Rasayana therapy, Immunity, Aging, Rejuvenation

INTRODUCTION

The Rasayana-tantra represents the basic approach of Ayurveda which comprises preventive promotive, curative aspects of health and carries the most practical methods for management of health and disease through its measures as the Rasayana-chikitsa. Every man wants to live long and healthy. This is possible by promoting rejuvenation, healing and regeneration of living tissue in the body and for this Rasayana therapy in Ayurveda. The classical Ayurvedic text says that medicine therapy is divided into preventive and curative therapy. Promotion of the health is main objective of Ayurveda which is achieved by the unique modality mentioned in Ayurveda called Rasayana or rejuvenation. This unique class of therapy enhances the life span, delays aging, improves the intelligence and memory power, promotes health, provides youthful states of the body, betters the body luster and voice improves the efficiency of the different cognitive abilities and enhances the innate health. The ultimate aim of Rasayana therapy improves strength, immunity, Ojas, vitality, longevity, memory, intelligence and excellence of luster. Acharya Charaka has described therapeutics of two types: Swasthasyaurjaskar (Promotive of Vigour in health or preventive Therapy) and Artasyarognut (Destructive of disease in the ailing or Curative Therapy)
1. Swasthasyaurjaskar
It means to promote and maintain the health of healthy person. The word ‘Urja’ means best (Prashasta), Bala (strength), Energy and life (Pranana). “As they provide the essential (Prashasta) bodily factors and enriches ones total structure, they are termed as Urjaskara, mentions Chakrapani. On the same level Gagadhar holds type of therapy coming under Swasthavritta means the therapeutic which promotes Oja, the vital energy. Similarly Yogindranath also explains Urjaskar means that which promotes strength, complexion, etc.

2. Artasyarognut
The word Arta as per Chakrapani implies painful conditions caused by various disorders like Jwara, Kushtha, etc. and thus Artasyarognut means the Bheshaja which pacifies those pains.

Classification of Rasayana
The objective of classification of Rasayana is to achieve preventive, promotive and curative aspects of health.

On the basis of the utility
1. Kamya Rasayana
2. Ajasrika Rasayana
3. Naimittika Rasayana

1) Kamya Rasyana:
To achieve desired specific purpose more towards to improving longevity (Ayusya) or to slow down the ageing process (Vayasthapana). Vayasthapaka Mahakashaya (Great Extractives) are Guduchi (Tinospora Cordifolia), Haritiki (Terminalia Chebula), Amalki (Emblica Officinale), Shweta (Clitoria Ternatea), Jeewanti (Leptadenia Reticulate), Atirasa (Asperagus Racemosus), Mandooparni (Centella Asiatica), Punarnava (Boerhaavia Diffusa) etc.

It is again of three subtypes:

(i) Prana kamya Rasayana (life energy): It is used for achieving or maintaining the best quality of Prana in the body. It promote longevity.
E.g. Amalaki, Haritaki, Guduchi etc.
(ii) Sri Kamya Rasayana: It promote body luster and complexion.
E.g. Guduchi, Amalaki, Triphala, Ashwagandha etc.
(iii) Medha kamya Rasayana: It promote mental competence.
E.g. Shankhpushpi, Brahmi, Vacha, Mandukparni etc

2) Ajasrika Rasyana: Daily use of milk, Ghee or any potential medicines to keep the person health to defend against various ailments and also to improve his general strength.

3) Naimittika Rasyana: Treatment of ailments using specific formulation for specific diseases. This is the curative aspect of Rasayana Chikitsa. For example, use of Agastyarasayana in Chronic Respiratory disorders is a type of Naimittika Rasayana. Silajatu (Asphaltum punjabinum) in Prameha, longevity.

Based on method of use:
1) Vatatapika Rasayana: i.e. outdoor regimen. For example “Chyavanapraasa” is used as a Rasayana for children or adult daily once or twice to enhance general immunity and strength.

2) Kutipravesika Rasayana: i.e. intensive indoor regimen.

Based on diet and life styles:
1) Asushdha Rasayana: Includes drug based Rasayana.

2) Achara Rasayana: Includes lifestyle and dietary based Rasayana are included in Ahara Rasayana.

Benefits of Rasayana:
According to Charaka Samhita - Rasayana help longevity, memory, intelligence, freedom from all diseases,
youth, excellence of luster, complexion, voice, excellent potentiality of body and sense organs, true words politeness and brilliance. Rasayana is a way for attaining excellent Rasa Dhatu.

**Sushruta Samhita**
- Sustains age and youthfulness
- Increase in life-span
- Increase intellectual capacity and strength
- Freedom from diseases (i.e. immunity is increased)
- Acts as rejuvenator and general restorative treatment

**Sharangdhara Samhita**
Acharaya Sharangdhar has described the progressive aging where it has been described that every individual is at risk of losing one of the following properties at every decade. Aging is a natural process and the changes that occur due to aging are bound to occur. The following table [Table 1] enumerates these changes of every stage of life and the possible Rasayana dravyas prescribed to prevent those changes or to minimize their effect as per Sharangdhara Samhita.

### Table 1: Need and Rasayana Medicine According to Age Groups according to Sharangdhara Samhita

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Loss of features</th>
<th>Desirable Rasayanas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First (0-10yrs)</td>
<td>Balyavastha (Childhood)</td>
<td>Swarna (Gold)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second (11-20yrs)</td>
<td>Vruddhi (Growth)</td>
<td>Bala (Sida cordifolia Linn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third (21-30yrs)</td>
<td>Chavi (Luster)</td>
<td>Amalaki (Emblica officinalis Gaertn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth (31-40yrs)</td>
<td>Medha (Intellect)</td>
<td>Shankapuspi (Convolvulus pluricaulis Choisy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth (41-50yrs)</td>
<td>Twaka (Complexion)</td>
<td>Jyotismati (Celastrus paniculatus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth (51-60yrs)</td>
<td>Drusti (Vision)</td>
<td>Jyotismati (Celastrus paniculatus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh (61-70yrs)</td>
<td>Shukra (Reproductive power)</td>
<td>Ashvagandha (Withania somnifera L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth (71-80yrs)</td>
<td>Vikrama (Courage)</td>
<td>Bala (Sida cordifolia Linn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth (81-90yrs)</td>
<td>Buddha (Intelligence)</td>
<td>Brahmi (Herpestris moniera HBK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth (91-100yrs)</td>
<td>Karma Indriya (Motor organs)</td>
<td>Bala (Sida cordifolia Linn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleventh (101-110yrs)</td>
<td>Chetas/Manasa (Mind)</td>
<td>Rasayana may not be effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelfth (111-120yrs)</td>
<td>Jivana (Ceasation of life)</td>
<td>Rasayana may not be effective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following are some of examples of Rasayanas used for specific purpose
- **Brahma Rasayana** – Useful in free from disease, gain longevity and vigour.
- **Chyawanprasha Rasayana** – It promotes intellect, memory, luster, immunity to disease, longevity, strength of sense organs, sexual excitement, great stimulation of digestive, clarity of complexion, downward movement of Vayu and emerges with fresh youthful complexion.
- **Amalakayasa Brahma Rasayana** – It is useful rejuvenating recipe which makes a person live for one thousand years, which prevents old age, cure disease, promotes Buddhi (wisdom) and strength of senses.
• **Aindra Rasayana** – It promotes longevity, nourishment, *Dhana* (wealth), *Svara* (voice) and *Varana* (complexion).\(^{14}\)

• **Pipalli Vardhamana Rasayana** – It is promoter of voice, longevity, restores youth and intellect.\(^{15}\)

• **Shilajatu Rasayana** – It is useful in long life, happiness, prevents ageing, disease. It is an excellent drug for producing sturdiness of body.\(^{16}\)

• **Haritaki Rasayana** – It developed powers to see through the completion of all projects in hand and leads a long life. Improves strength and gives healthy life and longevity.\(^{17}\)

• **Triphala Rasayana** – It nourishes both body & mind thereby promoting longevity of life and lives for one hundred years free from old age.\(^{18}\)

**Current Features of Rasayana Therapy**

*Rasayana Chikitsa* means rejuvenation therapy. Rejuvenation literally means to return to youthful conditions or to the normal from diseased state. Rejuvenation therapy helps to promote and preserve health. It also increases a healthy person’s mental and physical capabilities. It is known to have improved skin complexion and texture, modulates the voice and increases sensing capacity of sense organs. The person became healthy and strong.

**DISCUSSION**

It may ultimately be leading to the achievement of the comprehensive effect as stated by Charaka “*Labhopayohi shastanam rasadinam rasayanum.*” It effects mentioned in term of *Vayasthapana* and *Ayushkara, Medhakara, Urjaskara.* It stands as an answer to solve the problem of healthful longevity including mental development and resistance against disease. *Rasayana* drugs are used for preservation of positive health and act as a Antioxidants, immunomodulator. An immunomodulatory are used in longevity of life. These Antioxidants are useful for protection of heart disease, Diabetes mellitus. In these recent study *Ashwgandha* and *Guduchi* drugs are more helpful in preventing the oxidative stress and premature aging. Both drugs are safe for adults and indicate significant anti-aging effect in normal health.

**CONCLUSION**

*Rasayana Chikitsa* is a basic therapy for rejuvenation since it attains longevity, memory, intellect, freedom from disease, youth and excellence of luster. *Rasayana* is the preventive therapy describe in *Ayurveda* which is helpful to maintain health, retard aging process and promote immune system to fight against infection. *Rasayana* is not just a drug therapy but it is a specialized procedure practised in the form of rejuvenative recipes, dietary regimen and special health promoting conduct and behaviour. Scientific studies have proven the efficacious role of *Rasayana* remedies in the management of chronic life style related diseases and degenerative changes. It has been reported that the ‘*Rasayananas*’ are rejuvenators, nutritional supplements, possess strong antioxidant activity and antagonistic actions on the oxidative stressors. This review articles describes significant information’s regarding various options of *Rasayana Chikitsa* as per *Ayurveda* including herbs, combinations of herbs in the form of traditional formulation.
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