

RASAYANA - REJUVENATION THERAPY

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ABSTRACT

'Rasayana forms one of the eight clinical specialties of *Ayurveda*.^[1] This consist of a specialized use of certain drugs and measures which are supposed to (1) prevent aging and to impart longevity, (2) to impart immunity and body resistance against disease, (3) to impart mental faculties and (4) to add vitality and luster to the body^[2]. The *Rasayana* therapy is not a simple drug treatment. It is a specialized therapeutic procedure practiced as a major specialty in *Ayurveda* (Indian medicine)

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INTRODUCTION

A chronological study of the classical *Samhita* and *Samgraha* text of *Ayurveda* shows that *Charaka Samhita* which took centuries to come to the present shape was written in about 2000 B.C. *Bhela Samhita*, *Susruta Samhita* and *Kasyapa Samhita* are bit later works. The *Samgraha* books are still later compilations. A comparative study of the literature on *Rasayana* in different works shows that this has been much eloquently and elaborately described in *Charaka Samhita*.^[2] The *Rasayan* treatment has given more important than the general portion (internal medicine) by way of giving priority in describing it in the beginning of *Chikitsa Sthana* by *Charaka*.^[3] The description of *Rasayan* in *Bhela Samhita* which is available now in an incomplete form is missing *Susruta Samhita* a similar authentic classical text book of *Ayurveda* dealing principally with *Shalya* and *Shalakya Tantras* i.e. surgical sciences has not laid so much emphasis on *Rasayana Tantra* as *Charaka*. This work which is more precise and practical has given a comparatively moderate description of the *Rasayana* in four small

chapters out of which two deal with divine *Rsaayana* rather impractical for today. The definition of *Rasayan Tantra* in the *Susruta Samhita* is not so elaborate; though one finds an appropriate classification of *Rsaayana* in *Dalhanas* commentary^[4]. One finds an emphasis on *Naimittika Rasayana* described as adjuvant to specific curative treatment of certain diseases.

Astang Samgraha and *Ashtang Hridaya* have omitted the description of the divine *Rsaayana* and have incorporated many newer drugs of medicinal use such as *Rasona* and *Palandu*. Later on work on *Rasa Chikitsa* labeled many minerals and toxic drugs as *Rasayana* if used in proper dosage. On the whole it is observed that the practice of maintaining positive health and 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 the diseases become 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 and

positive health aspects of the medicine. No doubt the knowledge of *Rasayana* and the more of *Rasayana* drugs increased subsequently. It is seen that the *Rasayana* therapy particularly the *Kuti Pravesika* [5] or indoor management received less attention and emphasis in later period so much so that it gradually lost its place as an independent specialty and came to be regarded as a part of '*Kaya Chikitsa*' when '*Rasayana*' drugs were prescribed along with routine treatment. Thus it may be said that the '*Rasayan Tantra*' as an independent discipline has suffered a phase of involution during the post *Charaka* period.

MODE OF ACTION OF RASAYAN:

Rasayana drugs generally act at one or all of the following three levels of human biology

1. At the level of '*Rasa*' (plasma) by improving the nutritional value of the plasma and in turn by improving tissue nourishment.
2. At the level of '*Agni*' (digestion and metabolism) by improving the digestive capacity and by vitalizing the metabolic activities in the body.
3. At the level of '*Srotasa*' (microcirculation): This category of '*Rasayana*' drugs may produce the classical '*Rasayana*' effects by improving the microcirculation and tissue perfusion irrespective of the quality of nutrition and the rate of digestion and metabolism.

SELECTION OF RASAYAN DRUGS:

According to the principles of Indian medicine the '*Rasayan*' therapy is to be used in consideration of age, individual constitution, adaptability, digestive capacity, the metabolic status and the state of body tissues. For obtaining desired results a suitable '*Rasayana*' agent has to be se-

lected for a particular person in consideration of these factors.

This is essential because these factors greatly influence the requirements of an individual coming for '*Rasayana*' therapy. For instance as described by *Sharangaadhara* due to aging a person loses certain goods viz. '*Balya*' (childhood), *Vrddhi* (growth), *Chabi* (beauty), *Medha* (memory and intelligence), *Tvak* (luster of the skin), *Drsti* (vision), *Sukra* (semen), *Vikram* (strength), *Buddhi* (thinking) and *Karmendriya* (locomotor system) during 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th decades of life one needs different '*Rasayana*' drugs which may specifically provide the specific losses occurring as a part of aging process during the respective decades. Likewise, *Prakrti* (constitution), *Satmya* (adaptability), *Agni* (digestive capacity) and similar other internal and environmental factors should be considered while selecting the '*Rasayana*' drug for an individual.

CLASSIFICATION OF RASAYANAS:

The *Rasayan* therapy is advocated both for healthy as well as for ailing. *Kamya Rasayan* is indicated during health to improve the vigor and vitality. It may be used in patients suffering from specific diseases with a view to improve the vitality of the patients which may provide specific capacity to the patient to fight with those particular diseases. There are specific drugs to be used as *Naimittika Rasayana* for the patients of specific diseases viz. *Silajatu* for diabetes mellitus, *Tabaraka* and *Bhallataka* for leprosy and other dermatomes and so on. However, it may be pointed out that the *Naimittika Rasayana* drugs are not the specific treatment for the respective diseases; they are only the adjuncts to the specific therapy. Further, depending upon the results expected from

these agents the *Rasayana* drugs are classified in several classes viz. (1) *Prana Kamyas* (promoters of life span), (2) *Medha Kamyas* (promoters of intelligence), (3) *Sree Kamyas* (promoters of complexion and luster).

METHODS OF USE OF RASAYANA:

The *Rasayana* therapy is practiced by two methods:

1. *Vatatapika* or the outdoor regimen where the person may remain in the society and continue his duties while under therapy. This is a routine method of '*Rasayana*' therapy. It is convenient and is cheap but the results are not up to the mark.
2. *Kuti Praveshik* or a special indoor regime which is very rigorous procedure. The person has to be hospitalized he has to undergo *Panchakarma* (purificatory measures) as per standard schedule and then he has to start using the *Rasayana*(rejuvenating drug) selected for him in consideration of a number of factors mentioned earlier. During this period he has to stay in a

specifically constructed therapy chamber, the '*Rasayana Kuti*'. This procedure if practiced properly, is supposed to yield much better results than ordinary outdoor or '*Vatatapika*' use of '*Rasayana*' drugs. However, being a cumbersome procedure the '*Kuti Pravesika*' method is not commonly used these days.

THE RASAYANA DRUGS: The classical and subsequent *Ayurvedic* literature describes a large number of '*Rasayana*' drugs both herbs as well as minerals to be used singly or in the form of special compounds. Among a very wide range of drugs claimed to possess '*Rasayana*' (rejuvenating) effect the following drugs are more popular even today, viz. '*Amalaki, Pippali, Satavari, Amrta, Sankhapushpi, Bramhi, Vaca, Silajatu, Lauha* and '*Svarna*' as a single drugs and '*Cyavana prass*' and *Amalaka Curna Rasayana* as compound '*Rasayana*' drugs.

Table No. 1 Selected Rasayana drugs considering Vaya (age) [6]:

Sr. No.	Age groups	Desired effects	Drugs
1	1-10	<i>Balya</i>	<i>Vacha, Svarna, Kashmiri</i>
2	11-20	<i>Vrddhi</i>	<i>Kashmiri, Asvagandha, Bala.</i>
3	21-30	<i>Chabi</i>	<i>Louha, Amalaki.</i>
4	31-40	<i>Medha</i>	<i>Sankhapushpi, Brahmi, Jyotismati</i>
5	41-50	<i>Tvaka</i>	<i>Jyotishmati, Priyala, Somaraji, Bhrngaraja</i>
6	51-60	<i>Dristi</i>	<i>Jyotismati, Triphala, Saptamrta louha, Satavari</i>
7	61-70	<i>Sukra</i>	<i>Atmagupta</i> and other <i>Vajikara</i> drugs
8	71-80	<i>Vikram</i>	Drugs may not be effective.
9	81-90	<i>Buddhi</i>	Drugs may not be effective.
10	90-above	<i>Karmendriya</i>	Drugs may not be effective.

Table No. 2 Selected Rasayana drugs considering Deha Prakrti (Constitution)

Sr. No.	Prakrti	Drugs
1	<i>Vata Prakrti</i>	For body: <i>Bala, Nagabala</i> with <i>Ghrta</i> , For mind: <i>Asvagandha, Sankhapuspi</i>
2	<i>PaittikaPrakrti</i>	<i>Amalaki, Satavari</i>

3	<i>Kaphaja Prakriti</i>	<i>Bhallataka, Rasona, Guggulu, Pippali.</i>
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Table No. 3: Selected Rasayana drugs considering Satmya (Adaptability)

Sr. No.	Regarding Rtu Satmya (Weather):	Regarding Desa Satmya (Climate)
1	<i>Adana Kala</i> (Feb-July): <i>Sitavirya</i> and <i>Laghu Guna</i> drugs viz. <i>Amalaki</i>	<i>Sadharana Desa-Sadharan</i> drugs
2	<i>Visarga Kala</i> (Aug-Jan): <i>Usna virya</i> and <i>Guru Guna</i> drugs viz. <i>Bhallataka.</i>	<i>Jangal Desa:Snigdhosna</i> drugs
3		<i>Anup Desa:Ruksosna</i> drugs

Table No. 4: Selected Rasayana drugs considering Dhatus (Tissues)

Sr. No.	Dhatus (Tissues)	Rasayan Drugs
1	<i>Rasa</i> (Plasma)	<i>Kharjura, Draksha, Kasmari.</i>
2	<i>Rakta</i> (Blood)	<i>Lauhadi rasayan (Caraka)</i>
3	<i>Mamsa</i> (Muscle)	<i>Bala, Nagbala, Rudanti, Asvagandha, Salaparni, Kasmiri, Masha.</i>
4	<i>Meda</i> (Adepose Tissue)	<i>Guggulu, Silajatu, Amrta, Haritaki.</i>
5	<i>Asti</i> (Bones)	<i>Astisamhara, Laska, Bamsalocana, Sukti, Samkhya, Prsna parni.</i>
6	<i>Majja</i> (Bone Marrow)	<i>Louhadi Rasayana (Caraka) Vasa, Majja.</i>
7	<i>Sukra</i> (Semen)	<i>Atmagupta</i> and other <i>Vajikars</i> drugs.
8	<i>Ojasa</i>	<i>Pippali, jivaniya</i> group of drugs

Table No. 5: Selected Rasayana drugs considering Agni (Digestion and Metabolism)

Sr. No.	Agni	Rasayana Drugs
1	<i>Jatharagni</i>	<i>Vidanga, Haritaki, Pippali, Citraka.</i>
2	<i>Dhatvagni</i>	<i>Amalaki, Amrta, Kumari, Pippali.</i>

The Medhya Rasayana: Though in principles all ‘Rasayana’ drugs are supposed to rejuvenate both, the body as well as the mind, a separate class of ‘Rasayana’ drugs has been described in the text for specifically improving the ‘Medha’ i.e. the memory, will power and intelligence. Such drugs are known as ‘Medhya Rasayana’^[7] drugs or in lay man terms, brain tonics. Among a very wide range of such drugs the following have been considered important viz. ‘Sankhapushpi, Brahmi, Mandukparni, Guduchi, Yastimadhu, Jyotismati,

Vacha and *Asvagandha*. The recent studies done on this category of drugs has shown the possibility of varying degrees of psychotropic action in these drugs especially anti-anxiety effect. Some of them have also been found hypertensive.

The Naimittika Rasayana: As also mentioned earlier the ‘Rasayana’ therapy is advocated both during health as well as during disease. During health they are used to promote the general vigor and vitality while during disease they are used with a similar object to improve the vitality of a

patient so that he may fight out a particular disease. Specific *Rasayan* drugs have been advocated for specific diseases to be used as adjuncts to general treatment. Such '*Rasayana*' drugs are known as '*Naimittika*

rasayana'^[8] drugs. Following are the few examples of such drugs.

Table No. 6: Selected *Naimittika Rasayana* drugs considering diseases of specific organs or diseases of the body.

Sr. No.	Organ/ Diseases	Selected <i>Naimittika Rasayana</i> drugs
1	Eye	<i>Jyotismati, Triphala, Satavari, Yashti.</i>
2	Heart	<i>Salparni</i>
3	Skin	<i>Tubaraka, Bhallataka, Vidanga, Somaraji, Gandhaka Rasayana</i>
4	<i>Grahani</i> and <i>Gulma</i> (lower G.I. Tract diseases)	<i>Pippali, Bhallataka.</i>
5	Tuberculosis	<i>Rasona, Nagabala, Silajatu, Pippali.</i>
6	Anemia	<i>Lauha.</i>
7	Asthma	<i>Agastya Rasayana, Bhallataka.</i>
8	Neuromuscular diseases	<i>Rasona, Guggulu, Bala, Nagbala</i>
9	Diabetes	<i>Silajatu, Amalaki, Haridra.</i>
10	Obesity and lipid disorders	<i>Guggulu, Haritaki</i>
11	Hypertension	<i>Rasona, Bala, Rasna, other Medhya Rasayana drugs</i>
12	Hypotension	<i>Kasturi, Kupilu.</i>
13	Allergic diseases	<i>Haridra</i>

The *Acara Rasayana*:

Besides the use of drugs, it has been claimed that similar '*Rasayana*' effects both in the body as well as on the mind may be achieved by practicing an improved code of socio-behavioral conduct i.e. '*Sadacara*' or good conduct such as worship to gods, respect to elders and able, speaking truth, avoiding anger, avoiding excessive indulgence in alcohol, sex and excessive labor, keeping peaceful, speaking sweet words, practicing '*Mantra, Japa,*' etc., kindness to living beings, balanced sleep, regular use of milk, 'ghee' and other nutritious elements of diet, carrying for weathers and climates, keeping humble, kind and well behaved, practicing meditation, studying religious texts and by

respecting the persons who believe in God and who are self restrained. A person who adopts such a life and practices '*Sadacara*' achieves the '*Rasayana*' effects i.e. longevity, luster, complexion, immunity, and improved memory and intelligence without the use of any drug. Probably the measures described under '*Achara Rasayana*' keep a person free from the emotional disturbances and permit a less stressful life which keeps him happy and healthy. And such a person does not need any kind of meditation for this purpose. The profounder of *Ayurveda* were so emphatic about this aspect that they designed it as '*Acara Rasayana*' or the rejuvenating conduct.^[9]

CONCLUSION

Thus 'Rasayana' therapy of Indian medicine is a very comprehensive discipline based on an interesting philosophy and sound scientific footings, which embraces the psychosomatic concepts of health and happiness and is thus more suited to the modern society of today, and the medical needs of the time which is confronted with the newer challenges of diseases caused by stress and strain and premature aging.

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