

RASAYANA CHIKITSA: A COMPLETE THERAPY TO PREVENT AGEINGSharma Ekta¹, Mishra Pramod Kumar², Sharma Indumati³, Gautam Vinod Kumar⁴¹MD Scholar, P.G. Department of Kayachikitsa, Dr. S. R. Rajasthan Ayurved University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India²Associate Professor & HOD, P.G. Department of Kayachikitsa, Dr. S. R. Rajasthan Ayurved University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India³Associate Professor, P.G. Department of Kayachikitsa, M.M.M. Govt. Ayurvedic College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India⁴Assistant Professor, P.G. Department of Kayachikitsa, Dr. S. R. Rajasthan Ayurved University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, IndiaCorresponding Author: ekta5482@gmail.com<https://doi.org/10.46607/iamj3308082020>

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**ABSTRACT**

Ayurveda is the ancient system of medicine in the world. *Ayurveda* has two basic principles i.e. maintenance of healthy individuals and cure from the diseases. *Rasayana Chikitsa* is one of the eight branches of *Ayurveda* which aims at achieving a long and healthy life with fulfilling both of the principles. *Rasayana* is the term given to special herbs which decreases the ageing process, increases the life longevity, increases the mental as well as physical strength and destroys the disease process. The main purpose of *Rasayana Chikitsa* is to impede the aging process and delay the degenerative process in the body. It involves clinical effects like *Vaya Sthapaka*, *Ayushya*, *Medhya*, *Balya* and *Jara Vyadhi Nashaka* effects and work as immune stimulant, antioxidant, adoptogenic and anti-stress agent etc.

Keywords: *Rasayana*, *Rejuvenation Therapy*, *Ageing*, *Jara*, *Ayurveda*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is one of the world's oldest system of health. It is not just a health care system but a complete approach to healthy living. It deals with various aspects of healthy living and various remedies to be adopted in diseased conditions. *Ayurveda* is practiced in the form of *Ashtanga Ayurveda* (Eight folds of *Ayurveda*)^[1]. *Rasayana/Chikitsa* is one of the most important branches which fulfil the first object of *Ayurveda* i.e. *Swasthya Swasthya Rakshanam* and *Rasayana Chikitsa* also aims at rejuvenation and geriatric care. A long healthy life has been the cherished desire of man since antiquity. Man finds the real pleasure of life with full of activity and vigour during the period of youth. He hates old age and never wants to become old. In present scenario, in which people are not able to follow the rules of healthy and happy life due to improper dietary habits, erroneous lifestyle, excessive stress and lack of exercise, the process of ageing is starting very earlier with many psychological and physical illness. *Ayurveda* has two basic objectives i.e. maintenance of healthy individuals and cure from the diseases^[2]. More emphasis is laid down on maintenance of healthy individuals. This can be achieved by the approaches and the methods of preventive and promotive health care system of *Ayurveda* which includes the entire range of *Swasthavritta*, *Sadavritta*, *Hitakara Aahara-Vihara* and the rejuvenative measures of *Rasayana Chikitsa*. *Rasayana Chikitsa* is consist of certain dietary and therapeutic measures like herbal preparations along with lifestyle modifications, which are able to correct as well as improve state of *Dhatus* (Tissues) by a proper nutrition and thus retard pre-mature ageing to some extent and promote life longevity.

Definition of *Rasayana*

The term "*Rasayana*" used in *Ayurveda*, denotes a specific meaning. It consists of two words viz. '*Rasa*' and '*Ayana*'. '*Rasa*' means fluid or juice^[3] & '*Ayana*' means pathway^[4]. So, the literal meaning of *Rasayana* is 'Path of Juice'. *Rasa* denotes that thing which moves day & night^[5]. *Rasa* is defined as the *Sara* (Essence) of *Chaturvidha Aahara*^[6]. The means of obtaining optimum standard of *Rasa* is known as *Rasayana*. Differ-

ent classics of *Ayurveda* have defined *Rasayana* in different words but with the same central theme. *Acharya Charaka* has described *Rasayana* as the means by which one gets the excellence of *Rasadi Dhatus*^[7]. On the comments of *Acharya Charak's* definition, *Acharya Gangadhara* has mentioned *Rasayana* as a particular measure by which one can gain life longevity, lasting memory, vigour, vitality etc^[8]. *Acharya Sushruta* has defined *Rasayana* as the substance which decreases age process, increases the life longevity, increases the mental as well as physical strength and destroys the disease process^[9].

Benefits of *Rasayana Chikitsa*

Ayurveda has two basic objectives i.e. to maintain the health of healthy individuals and to cure the diseases of diseased ones^[10]. For accomplishing these objectives of *Ayurveda*, two types of medicines are described i.e. *Swasthasyaorjaskara* and *Roganuta*^[11]. The definition of *Acharya Charaka* regarding *Rasayana* reveals the fact that *Rasayana* drugs possess both these activities because a drug which is *Swasthasyorjaskar* will efficiently prevent the occurrence of diseases in persons. *Acharya Sharangdhara* has clearly indicated that *Rasayana* drugs prevent ageing and diseases^[12]. *Acharya Dalhana* also stated that *Rasayana* drugs are *Ayushakara* in nature that's why these drugs prevent diseases and old age^[13]. While describing the properties of *Rasayana*, *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned that on administration of *Rasayana*, one attains life longevity, memory, intelligence, freedom from disorders, youthful age, excellence of lusture, complexion, voice, optimum strength of physique and sense organs, successful words, respectability and brilliance^[14]. Appreciating the efficacy of *Rasayana Chikitsa*, *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned that if it is administrated as per the directions and normal laid down for the purpose, one may acquire '*Brahma*' or may attain '*Moksha*'^[15]. It has been stated that *Devatas* and *Rishis* used to take *Rasayana* methodically and regularly. As a result, they could beat old age, weakness, emaciation, diseased states and death and used to enjoy age of thousands of years^[16].

Classification of Rasayana

There is various classification of *Rasayana Chikitsa*. Some of them are as follows-

As per mode of administration of Rasayana: [17]

1. *Kutipravesika*
2. *Vatatapika*

Kutipravesika is one in which *Rasayana* is given with person staying inside a closed *Kuti* whereas *Vatatapika* is that in which *Rasayana* is administered with patient is exposed to *Vata* (Wind) and *Aatapa* (Sun). In other words, *Kutipravesika* is an indoor administration while *Vatatapika* is an outdoor administration of *Rasayana*.

As per Mode of Action: [18]

1. *Samshodhana Rasayana*
2. *Samshamana Rasayana*

Samshodhana and *Samshamana*, both are curative in nature. *Samshodhana* type of *Rasayana* expels the aggravated *Doshas* whereas *Samshamana* type pacifies the accumulated ones.

As per purpose of administration: [19]

1. *Kamya Rasayana*
2. *Naimittika Rasayana*
3. *Ajasrika Rasayana*

Kamya Rasayana is subdivided into *Pranakamiya*, *Shrikamiya* and *Medhakamiya* i.e., to increase the life span, to prolong the life span and to increase the cognitive abilities of mind respectively. *Naimittika* type of *Rasayana* is nothing but *Rasayana* specific to a disease. *Ajasrika Rasayana* deals with daily intake of milk, ghee etc.

Indications & Contraindications of Rasayana Chikitsa

Indications: It is mentioned in classics that *Rasayana Chikitsa* if administered improperly, it produces several hazardous effects [20]. *Rasayana Chikitsa* has been indicated for young and middle aged persons after prior unctio and evacuation and also people who are healthy, intelligent, having self-control over senses, a

good amount of money and sufficient time, can be treated with *Rasayana Chikitsa* [21].

Contraindications: *Acharya Sushruta* has described seven types of persons who are not suitable for *Rasayana* such as- *Anatmavana* (Devoid of self-restraint), *Aalasi* (Lazy), *Daridra* (Poor), *Pramadi* (Careless), *Vyasani* (Addict), *Paapi* (Involved in sinful activities) and *Bhaishajaapamani* (Averse to medicines) [22].

Ageing (Jara): *Vaya* (Age) can be defined as the duration of time since birth to the present for a living individual. In *Ayurveda*, Ageing is known as “*Jara*” and defined as “*Jeeryati itti jara*” i.e. which has become old by act of wearing out. The term *Jara* is used for senescence period which means the condition of process of deterioration with age. According to *Acharya Charaka* the span of life is of 100 years. He has divided “*Vaya*” into three parts [23] i.e. *Balyavastha* (Upto 30 years), *Madhyamavastha* (From 31 to 60 years) and *Jeernavastha* (61 to 100 years). Further *Balyavastha* has been divided into two types, viz. *Aparipakwa Dhatu Balyavastha* (Immature stage) lasting upto 16 years of age and *Paripakwa Dhatu Balyavastha* (Mature stage) lasting upto the age of 30 years. But *Acharya Sushruta* has divided *Vaya* in three different categories [24] i.e. *Balya* (Upto 16 years), *Madhya* (17 to 70 years) and *Vridhdha* (Above 70 years). Further *Madhya Avastha* has been divided in four subparts [25] i.e. *Vriddhi* (17 to 20 years), *Yauvana* (21 to 30 years), *Sampoornata* (31 to 40 years) and *Haani* (41 to 70 years). Following all these stages a person gets *Vridhdhavastha* / *Jeernavastha* (Old age) after the age of 60 or 70 years. The old age is defined as by giving it a simile of decaying old house which may collapse during any rainy season [26]. In *Jeernavastha* (old age), there is diminution of *Dhatu*s (Tissues), strength of sense organs, energy, masculinity, courage, power of understanding, retention, memorising, speech and analysing facts [27]. Apart from this, *Acharya Vagbhatta* and *Acharaya Sharangdhara* have divided life in decades and described decade wise loss as follows –

Decade	Ashtanga Samgraha [28]	Sharangdhara Samhita [29]
1.	Balya (Childhood)	Balya (Childhood)
2.	Vridhhi (Growth)	Vridhhi (Growth)
3.	Prabha (Lusture)	Chhavi (Lusture)
4.	Medha (Intellect)	Medha (Intellectual power)
5.	Twaka (Complexion)	Twaka (Skin health)
6.	Shukra (Semen)	Drishti (Vision)
7.	Akshi (Vision)	Shukra (Semen)
8.	Shruti (Hearing)	Vikrama (Valour)
9.	Mana (Mind)	Buddhi (Intelligence)
10.	Sarvendriya (All senses)	Karmendriya (Physical capacity)
11.		Chetas (Spirituality)
12.		Jeevana (Life)

It is obvious from the foregoing that ageing is a slow and continuous process which affects various bodily tissues at different times.

Types of Jara (Ageing)

Ayurveda categorises aetiological factors for any disease as i.e. *Swabhavika*, *Agantuka*, *Sharirika* and *Manasika* [30]. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned a group of naturally occurring diseases formed as *Swabhava Bala Pravritta* which includes *Jara* (Ageing) also [31]. *Acharya Dalhana* while commenting on the *Swabhava Bala Pravritta* mentions that this type of disease occurs due to the power of nature [32]. *Acharya Sushruta* has divided the *Swabhava Bala Pravritta* diseases into two group viz. *Kalaja* & *Akalaja* [33]. In this way, *Jara* (Ageing) also can be divided into two groups, viz. *Kalaja Jara* (Natural ageing) and *Akalaja Jara* (Premature ageing).

1. Kalaja Jara (Natural Ageing): The appearance of *Jara* (Ageing) at the appropriate age i.e. above 60 years may be termed as *Kalaja Jara*. This is considered accordingly to *Acharya Charaka* but *Acharya Sushruta* increases this limit upto 70 years [34]. Actually, it is not a disease but the phenomenon which starts much earlier at about the age of 40 years. This type of *Jara* is considered as '*Parirakshna Krita*' [35], because it occurs at its prescribed age or a bit late due to the carefully following the daily & seasonal schedules described in "*Swasthvritta*" and by performing the "*Shodhana*" at the proper time. Thus, *Kalaja Jara* is possible only if one remains careful towards his health and therefore it may be a

slow progressive and without disturbing much the physical health and mental faculties of aged.

2. Akalaja Jara (Premature Ageing): The appearance of signs and symptoms of *Jara* (Ageing) before the age of 60 or 70 years may be described as *Akalaja Jara*. This type of *Jara* is considered as '*Aparirakshna Krita*' [36], because it occurs before the prescribed age for not taking the care of "*Swasthvritta*" (Personal hygiene) and not getting the "*Shodhana*" (Purification) done at the proper time as mentioned in *Ayurveda*. According to *Acharya Dalhana* the main cause of *Akalaja Jara* is one's carelessness towards his health [37]. By screening different *Ayurvedic* texts the *Hetus* (Aetiological factors) of *Akalaja Jara* may be summarized as follows [38] [39] [40] -

(A) *Aaharaja Hetu*:

- *Amla, Katu, Lavana Rasa, Kshara, Guru, Ruksha, Klinna, Abhishyandi, Puti, Paryushita* food articles
- *Navashukadhanya, Navashamidhanya, Shushkamamsa, Tila, Palal, Pishtanna* etc.
- Different type of *Viruidhaahara* (Incompatible food), *Asatmayaahara* (Unwholesome diet), *Vishmashana* (Improper eating habits), *Adhyashana* (Overeating) etc.

(B) *Viharaja Hetu*: *Atimarga Gamana* (Excessive walk), *Diva Swapna* (Day sleeping), *Nitya Stree Sevana* (Excessive intercourse), *Nitya Madhya Sevana* (Excessive intake of Alcohol), *Ativyayama Sevana* (Improper exercise),

(C) *Manasika Hetu: Bhaya, Krodha, Shoka, Lobha, Moha, Manasika Dukha* (Mental worries) etc.

Need of Rasayana Chikitsa In Jara (Ageing)

As mentioned earlier that *Jara* (Ageing) and death are *Swabhavika* (Natural) phenomenon and *Acharya Charaka* considered them as '*Nishpratikriya*'^[41] i.e. by nature these are incurable. But in another context, while describing the best *Bhavas* (Things / *Agrya Samgraha*) for the various medical problems, *Acharya Charaka* mentions "*Jara Yapyanam*"^[42] which means *Jara* (Ageing) is on the top amongst the diseases which cannot be cured but the patient may be kept symptoms free by proper treatment. *Acharya Chakrapani* while commenting on the word *Nishpratikriya* mentions that the ordinary treatment modalities has got no effect on ageing, but *Rasayana* therapy (Especially *Kutipravveshika Rasayana*) is effective against it^[43]. It has been clearly mentioned in *Charaka Samhita* that old *Chyawana Rishi* became younger after the use of *Rasayana Chikitsa*^[44]. In this way the premature ageing can be treated successfully by the *Rasayana* Therapy. However, *Rasayana* is also not a complete cure of the *Jara* as it can just check or delay the ageing process for some time and as soon as the effect of *Rasayana* vanishes, the process of ageing leading to the end of life. *Acharya Dalhana* also states that *Akalaja Jara* can easily be cured while *Kalaja Jara* requires continuous care with *Rasayana* drugs i.e. it is of *Yapya* type^[45].

On the basis of foregoing it can be said that the ageing can be checked and retracted to some extent by the timely and proper use of *Ayurvedic* principles of daily and seasonal schedules. *Rasayana* therapy is effective for both *Kalaja* and *Akalaja* type of *Jara* by means of treating *Akalaja Jara* and retarding the *Kalaja Jara* maintains the physical and mental health of the aged, so that they may remain relevant to the society even in their last decades of life.

Mode of Action of Rasayana Drugs In Ageing

Rasayana drugs are used for preservation of positive health. *Acharya Sushruta* defines a healthy man as one who has equilibrium of *Doshas*, normal functioning of *Agni*, balance state of all *Dhatus*, beside his soul, the

sense organs and mind should be happy and cheerful^[46].

Rasayana is a specialized approach of treatment influencing the fundamental aspect of body i.e. *Dhatu, Agni, Ojas* and *Srotas*. It is possible that different *Rasayana* drugs may act with predominance effect at different levels. These comprehensive effects are brought about with the help of the varied pharmacodynamics properties of *Rasayana* drugs. *Rasayana* effect is not a specific pharmacological action but is a complex phenomenon operating through a comprehensive mechanism involving the fundamental factors like *Rasa Samvahan, Dhatus, Agni, Ojas* and *Srotas*. It may ultimately be led to the achievement of the comprehensive effect of *Rasayana* as stated by *Acharya Charak* "*Labhopayo Hi Shastanam Rasadinam Rasayanam*"^[47]. Considering the *Ayurvedic* concept of physiology it may be presumed that a *Rasayana* agents promotes nutrition through one of the following the modes-

- 1. At the level of Rasa:** The *Rasayana* drugs acts at the level of *Rasa* by improving specific nutritional values of *Poshaka Rasa*. Probably such type of *Rasayana* drugs are having *Madhura, Guru, Snigdha* and *Sheeta* properties act at the level of *Rasa* by promoting the nutritional value of the tissue plasma, which in turn helps in obtaining the best qualities of *Dhatus*.
- 2. At the level of Agni:** Some *Rasayana* drugs have a fundamental effect at the level of *Agni* i.e. digestion and metabolism. The drugs which possess the *Ushna, Laghu, Ruksha* and *Katu, Tikta, Kashaya Rasa* may act at the level of *Agni*, vitalizing the organic metabolism leads to an improved structural and functional pattern of tissues and production of the *Rasayana* effects. Drugs such as *Pippali, Guggulu, Rasona, Bhallataka, Rudanti* mainly act at the level of *Agni*, so improve the digestion and create excellence of *Saptadhatu*s. The *Rasayana* drugs like *Vidanga, Chitraka* and *Haritaki* are found to enhance *Agni* status at level of *Jatharagni*. Similarly, *Amalaki, Amrita, Pippali, Kumari* are supposed to be act at level of *Dhatvagni* which may leads to the excellence of all *Dhatus*.

3. **At the level of Srotas:** Some *Rasayana* drugs have a fundamental effect at the level of *Srotas* i.e. microchannels. These drugs help to better bioavailability of nutrients to the tissues and improve tissue perfusion. The *Rasayana* drugs having *Katu*, *Tikta*, *Kashaya Rasa*; *Vishada*, *Ruksha*, *Laghu Guna*; *Ushna Veerya* and *Katu Vipaka* may leads to *Srotoshodhana* and may help in the evaluation of the *Rasayana* effect in the body. *Guggulu*, *Rasona*, *Madhu* are best example which acts at the level of *Srotas*.
4. **At the level of Ojas:** There are certain *Rasayana* drugs which directly influence the better formation and functions of *Oja* i.e. bio-immune strength. Drugs such as *Jeevaniya Gana*, *Swarna* and *Pippali* are supposed to induced *Bala* and *Vyadhikshmatva* in the individual.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda advocates wonderful approach to delay *Kalaja Jara* and to avoid *Akalaja Jara*. *Ayurveda* gives primary importance to preventive and promotive health care and the maintenance of positive health. The major preventive approaches for maintain and improving the quality of life include individualized specific measures like *Dincharya*, *Ratricharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta*, *Hitakara* and *Matravata Aahara*, *Rasayana Chikitsa* etc. *Rasayana Chikitsa* is very effective method for geriatric health care in present time. There is conventional understanding that *Rasayana* therapy is a kind of geriatric system and should be used in old age. This is not true. *Rasayana* is not only for geriatrics, but it is the science of nutrition i.e. *Poshana* and is applicable to all ages from paediatrics to geriatrics. Though its use may prolong life span and impart life longevity. Nutrition is the primary attribute of *Rasayana*, longevity and ageing issues are one of its secondary attributes^[48]. Impairment of *Rasa* (Nourishment) results in disease and decay. *Rasa* should be present in adequate quantity and should be able to penetrate throughout the various cells off the body to penetrate throughout the various cells of the body to provide nourishment. *Dhatus* undergo a continuous process of decay due to interaction with the *Agnis*. If this is allowed to continue uninterrupted, age-

ing comes in early. In youth, *Agni* helps speed up synthesis of ingredients for growth of cells whereas in old age the destructive activity is enhanced rendering the human susceptible to several types of diseases ultimately leading to death. If this process is somehow arrested, by supplying *Rasa* in adequate quantity with the power to penetrate, ageing can be delayed. In *Ayurvedic* texts, it is also stated that the optimum effect of *Rasayana* therapy can be obtained only if this therapy is used between 3rd & 5th decades of life “*Purve vayasi Madhye Vaa*”^[49].

CONCLUSION

Rasayana Chikitsa is primarily aimed to prevent premature ageing, handle the sequel of normal ageing and thus enable the person to encompass the benefits of complete span of life and to boost painless death.

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