

# International Research Journal of Ayurveda & Yoga

Vol. 5 (12),82-85, Dec,2022

ISSN: 2581-785X;<https://irjay.com/>

DOI: [10.47223/IRJAY.2022.51213](https://doi.org/10.47223/IRJAY.2022.51213)



## Concept of Rasayana and its Role in Current Times-A Review

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received on: 03-11-2022

Accepted on: 25-12-2022

Available online: 31-12-2022

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### ABSTRACT:

**Introduction:** The word Rasayana means the way for attaining *excellent Rasadi Dhatus*. Rasayana is a unique branch of Ayurveda. It promotes the inner healing power of an individual and helps in over taking the pain and disease while promoting the immunity (*Svasthanya Orjaskaram*). As we know, in the present era, every human being is living under pressure to survive. This stressful life harms our health, happiness and inner sense of well-being. Increased pollution and excessive use of chemical products are also a root of many fatal diseases. In this regard, Rasayana Therapy becomes an essential tool to rejuvenate the body system for a better harmony in body, mind and soul. Advances in recent decades in understanding of aging have revived interest in antiaging factors and thus also in the Rasayana therapy. Rasayana Therapy is also known as Rejuvenation therapy which aims to restore the body's vigour and vitality. In this review, concept of Rasayana and its role in the present era has been highlighted.

**Methods:** The material has been collected from various Ayurveda texts and scholarly articles for deep understanding of Rasayana.

**Results:** Rasayana is a specialized type of treatment influencing the fundamental aspects of the body viz. dhatus (body tissues), agni (the metabolic activity) and strotamsi (microcirculation) and helps in the prevention of aging. This review showed that Rasayana may provide age-stabilizing effects along with the preservation and promotion of health.

**Discussion:** The purpose of Ayurveda is maintenance of Swasthya (health) and treatment of the Aatura (diseased person). Rasayana is equally important in treatment of diseases as well as in maintaining health. Use of different Rasayana herbs as per disease is useful in correcting Dhatu Vaishamya and attaining Dhatu Samya. Proper understanding and application of this concept in practice of Ayurveda would only lead to perfect and precise treatment.

**Keywords:** Rasayana, Immunity, Rejuvenation, Ayurveda

### INTRODUCTION

*Labhopayo Hi Shastanam Rasadinam Rasayanam*<sup>1</sup>. Rasayana is a union of two Sanskrit words 'Rasa' and 'Ayana'. The literal meaning of Rasa is the essence of something. Anything that we take into the body in the form of food or medicine is first resynthesized into Rasa dhatu,

which is the basic plasma tissue of our body.

Ayana means microcellular channels and hence Rasayana essentially means nutrition at microcellular level. The means by which one gets the excellence of Rasa (The nourishing fluid which is produced immediately after



digestion) is known as *Rasayana*.

Vivid descriptions about *Rasayana* are available in the three great texts of Ayurveda (Brihatrayi, namely, *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*). *Charaka Samhita*, one of the most revered texts of Ayurveda, begins its treatment section (Chikitsa Sthana) with a highly illustrative description of *Rasayana*. This reflects the importance of *Rasayana* as a preventive, restorative, and curative measure before recommendation of the therapeutic interventions for a disease. On the basis of their actions, *Rasayana* are further defined as the one which arrests disease and the other symptoms of aging. *Sushruta* described *Rasayana* in a more advanced and illustrated manner. Whereas *Charaka* primarily focused upon bringing qualitative and subsequently functional changes at the cell and tissue levels with the help of *Rasayana*, *Sushruta* recommended use of *Rasayana* for many morbid conditions as well. This disease-specific *Rasayana* approach of *Sushruta* is visible from the name of its chapter dealing with *Rasayana* (Sarvopghat Shamaniya *Rasayana*, i.e., *Rasayana* which conquers all the assaultive events).

In the present scenario, one of the greatest problems that the world is facing today is that 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 like intake of substandard diet, *viruddha*, *vidahi*, *abhishyandi* diets and abandoning the rules of dietetics as described in texts. Due to these factors nourishing fluid (*Rasa dhatu*) of good quality is not produced, *Strotoavrodha* is manifested, therefore nutrition of further dhatus is also impaired and imbalance in doshas occurs, which makes the person susceptible for illness. *Rasayana* are the means and methods of bringing qualitative improvements at cellular levels, and this can either be drug based, food based, or nondrug based. Many herbs and dietary material can act as *Rasayana* and work as immune stimulant, antioxidant, adaptogenic and antistress agent etc.<sup>2</sup>

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Information extracted from various Ayurveda texts, modern literature, journals and review articles pertaining to *Rasayana* was analyzed for comprehensive understanding of concept of *Rasayana*.

### **Benefits of *Rasayana* in Brihat-trayi : *Rasayana* in Charak Samhita<sup>3</sup>:**

- It enhances the intelligence, memory power, will power, body strength, skin lustre, sweetness of voice and physical strength.
- It nourishes the blood, lymph, flesh, adipose tissue and semen and thus prevents chronic degenerative changes and illness. It gives freedom from chronic degenerative disorders like Arthritis and senile diseases.
- *Rasayana* is thought to improve metabolic processes, which results in the best possible biotransformation and produce the best-quality body tissues and eradicates senility and other diseases of old age.
- Helps to attain optimal physical strength and sharpness of sense organs.
- *Rasayana* which has marked action on reproductive organs and also nourishes shukra dhatu.
- *Rasayana* nourishes the whole body and improves natural resistance against infection by increasing immunity power.
- *Rasayana* Therapy which regulates the circulation of vital fluid and eliminates the waste materials, rejuvenate the nervous system and keep vigour and stamina.
- Prevents wasting of muscles, delays the ageing process, keeps strong bones, tendons etc. Prevents osteoporosis, improves whole body circulation, prevents greying of hair and provides good sleep and appetite.
- *Rasayana* Therapy keeps the body and mind pleasant.

### ***Rasayana* in Sushrut Samhita:**

*Rasayana* is the one that nourishes various dhatus of the body and also improves the *Rasa*, *Virya*, *Vipaka* and *Prabhava*, which affects the age, strength and stability of an individual.

### ***Rasayana* in Ashtanga Hridaya:**

A person undergoing rejuvenation therapy gains long life, good memory, intelligence, good health (free from diseases), youth, excellent aura and lusture, good skin complexion, good voice, physical strength, strong sense organs, good oration skills, have aphrodisiac properties, respect and brilliance. Methods or therapy through which one gets (*Prashasta Rasa dhatu*) the maximum utilisation of the end product of digestion is known as *Rasayana* or Anti-ageing/ Rejuvenation therapy.

### **Relevance of *Rasayana* in the Present Era**

*Rasayana* therapy aids in reviving the health of a healthy person as well as in combating the disease of the diseased one. It enables the body to develop its own vital energy or the defensive mechanism against disease. *Rasayanas* are

believed to build a barrier against stress and infection. These act principally by strengthening the immune system of the body acting as both brain and body tonic. Clinical studies have proved *Rasayana* to be anti-toxic and anti-infective drugs. *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera* L Dunal), *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus* Linn), *Brahmi* (*Centella asiatica* L) improve antioxidant levels & reduce oxidative damage of nervous system.<sup>4</sup> *Amalaki* (*Embelica officinalis* Linn), *Shatavari* (*Asparagus racemosus* Willd), all improve GIT functions & have very good hepatotoxic activity.<sup>5</sup> Role of *Ashwagandha* in various CNS disorders, particularly its indication in epilepsy, stress and neurodegenerative diseases, such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disorders, cerebral ischemia, and even in the management of drug addiction, has been reviewed. *Rasayana* are perhaps the only 'wonder' drugs that can be taken safely for long stretches of time, even in a healthy state, without any specific contradictions.

The possible mechanisms by which action of *Rasayana* can be interpreted with modern aspects:

1. Antioxidant action: Antioxidants are defined as substances whose presence in relatively low concentrations significantly inhibits the rate of oxidation of targets. Being present in serum, these antioxidants circumvent the damage caused by oxygen free radical.
2. Immunomodulatory action: Immunomodulator is a substance that alters the immune response by augmenting or reducing the ability of the immune system to produce antibodies or sensitized cells that recognize and react with the antigen that initiated their production.
3. Adaptogenic action: An adaptogen is a metabolic regulator which increases the ability of an organism to adapt to environmental factors, and to avoid damage from such factors. Environmental factors can be either physiological (external), such as injury or aging, or psychological(internal), such as anxiety. Some adaptogenic herbs are-*Ashwagandha*, *Tulsi*, *Haridra*, *Pippali*, *Amalaki*, *Guduchi*, *Shatavari*.
4. Nootropic- They are substances which promote intelligence and functions of brain. These drugs can be categorized as *Medhya Rasayana* drugs. Acharya Charaka has described four important *Medhya Rasayana* drugs namely- *Mandookparni*, *Guduchi*, *Yashtimadhu* and *Shankhpushpi*.<sup>6</sup>

## RESULT & DISCUSSION

Three Doshas are the fundamental constituents of life. Also, these doshas when vitiated are responsible for

generation of diseases. Person's dietary regimen and lifestyle are totally responsible for vitiation of Doshas in our body. The doshas get vitiated because of substandard diet and ingredients of food which are sour, saline, pungent and alkaline. Intake of dry vegetables, meat, ingredients which are mutually contraindicated like fruit salad, banana with milk, fish and milk, *Abhishyandi* diet (eg. Eating curd in night), heavy, putrid and stale food, habits like irregular time of diet, taking food before the previous meal is digested. Lifestyle like addiction of day sleep and alcoholic beverages, exposure to stressful life, irregular and excessive exercise, subjected to excess of fear, hunger, grief, greed and overwork. These factors vitiate the Doshas. Vitiating doshas ultimately lead to diseases.

"*Swasthasya oorjaskaram*" is a property of *Rasayana*, that means it maintains as well as boosts the health status of an individual which highlights its immunomodulatory action. *Rasayanas* have played a vital role as an antiviral and also an immunomodulatory therapy during the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>7</sup> A research showed that the *Amalaki Rasayana* helps in increasing the telomerase activity and may prevent the erosion of telomeres over a period of time in aged individuals to promote healthy ageing.<sup>8</sup> In other words, it can be stated that *Rasayana* is a way to achieve homeostasis and thus retarding the process of aging phenomenon and diseases. In the present scenario, mental health and supporting researches are at prime interest of the researcher society. *Rasayana* not only is a drug therapy, but also a specialized procedure, practiced in the form of rejuvenation recipes, dietary regimen and special health promoting right conduct and behavior, i.e. '*Acharya Rasayana*'. *Rasayana* not only rejuvenates the physical function of body, but also it boosts up the mental functions as well as can be used while treating conditions like depression.<sup>9</sup> *Sushruta* has narrated that *Rasayana* therapy arrests ageing (*Vayasthapam*), increase life span (*Ayushkaram*), intelligence (*Medha*) and strength (*Bala*) and thereby enables one to prevent diseases.

Every human is desirous of longevity, youthfulness, and health. This is possible by promoting rejuvenation, healing and regeneration of living tissues in the body.<sup>10</sup> *Rasayana* is a broad term which includes *Jara-Nirvartaka* (checks senile degeneration), *Vyadhi Nivartaka* (cures diseases), *Prashasta-Dhatujanaka* (keeps healthy tissue level) and *DhirghaAyushkara* (provides longevity) properties and scientific studies have proven their preventive, curative and promotive aspects of health. *Rasayana* therapy definitely helps to improve immune system.<sup>11</sup> The nourishing

*Rasayanas* provide supplements and replenishes the nutrients robbed by ageing, and is said to alleviate disease and promote optimum health. *Rasayana* helps to restore the youthful state of our physical and mental health. It is often seen that the principles mentioned in the classical texts of Ayurveda are equally applicable in the current era also. Looking at this and the indications and benefits of *Rasayana* from the classical texts of Ayurveda, *Rasayana* can show a new path to contemporary medical sciences in managing and preventing certain diseases that are out of their hands. Strong undercurrent favouring research works dedicated to *Rasayana* are required that can open new doors to patient care.

## CONCLUSION

*Rasayana* therapy has a significant potential in increasing quality of life of humans. It looks promising when viewed from its textual point. There are elaborated and explicit details in Ayurveda regarding use of various *Rasayana* in conditions of health and disease. Complexities associated with its use, intangibility of effects, and need of long-term usage are further limiting factors. However, despite these limitations, potential of *Rasayana* in the current context of increasing life span and consequent increase in requirement of care of the elderly population needs a revisit. Proper understanding and application of this concept in practice of Ayurveda would only lead to perfect and precise treatment.

**Acknowledgements - Nil**

**Conflict of interest - None**

**Source of finance & support - Nil**

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**How to cite this article:** Sitpal N, Pamnani G.C, Agalcha R "Concept Of *Rasayana* And Its Role In Current Times-A Review" *IRJAY*. [online] 2022; 5(12); 82-85. Available from: <https://irjay.com>  
DOI link- <https://doi.org/10.47223/IRJAY.2022.51213>