



World Journal of Pharmaceutical Science & Technology

Journal homepage: www.wjpst.com

Review Article

RASAYANA CHIKITSA AND ITS ROLE IN PROMOTING HEALTH: AN EXTENSIVE REVIEW

DR. JAGDISH PRASAD BAIRWA¹

1. Ayurved Medical Officer, Government of Rajasthan.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Jagdish Prasad Bairwa, Ayurved Medical Officer, Government of Rajasthan.

Email Id: dripbayu@gmail.com

Received: 18-12-2017, Revised: 12-01-2018, Accepted: 30-02-2018

1. ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, regarded as the world's oldest system of medicine, encompasses all dimensions of human life. Its fundamental objectives are the preservation of health and the treatment of disease, both of which are effectively supported through *Rasāyana Chikitsā* (rejuvenation therapy). *Rasāyana* is specifically aimed at promoting longevity, enhancing memory and intellect, preserving youthfulness, preventing diseases, and improving physical appearance, voice, strength, sensory functions, wisdom, communication ability, and overall vitality. As one of the principal branches of Aṣṭāṅga Ayurveda, *Rasāyana* focuses on revitalisation and holistic well-being. The formulations and regimens under this therapy act by improving the quality of *Rasa Dhātu* (nutrient plasma) and other *Dhātus* (tissues), thereby reinforcing the entire body system. In doing so, *Rasāyana* enhances immunity, maintains the efficient functioning of vital organs, delays premature ageing, and harmonises the natural processes of growth and degeneration that occur throughout life. Since ageing is characterised by gradual structural and functional decline, *Rasāyana* therapy plays a pivotal role in slowing these changes. In addition to medicinal preparations, Ayurveda also emphasises *Āchāra Rasāyana*, a non-pharmacological approach that rejuvenates life through proper diet, healthy lifestyle, ethical conduct, and disciplined behaviour. Thus, *Rasāyana* is not confined merely to herbal remedies but represents a comprehensive system for sustaining health, vitality, and longevity.

KEYWORDS: *Rasayan*, *Achar Rasayan*, health

INTRODUCTION

Ashtanga Ayurveda and the Role of *Rasayana*

Ayurveda is also referred to as *Ashtanga Ayurveda* because it is divided into eight distinct branches:

1. ***Kaya Chikitsa*** – dealing with general medicine for the whole body.

2. **Bala Chikitsa** – focused on the treatment of children.
3. **Graha Chikitsa** – addressing psychological and mental health disorders.
4. **Urdhvanga Chikitsa** – concerned with diseases of the ear, nose, throat, and head.
5. **Shalya Chikitsa** – related to surgical practices.
6. **Visha Chikitsa** – dealing with toxicology and poisons.
7. **Rasayana Prakarana** – therapies aimed at rejuvenating the seven body tissues (*Sapta Dhatus*).
8. **Vajikarana Chikitsa** – associated with fertility and promoting healthy progeny.

Rasāyana therapy holds a special place in Ayurveda, as it not only revitalises the body but also plays an important role in supporting reproductive health. Many *Rasāyana* formulations are described as having *Vājīkaraṇa* (aphrodisiac) properties. By nourishing the *Śukra Dhātu* (reproductive tissue/semen), they help in generating healthy progeny endowed with strong immunity, a stable genetic constitution, and minimal hereditary disorders. Commonly used *Rasāyana* preparations include *Āmalakī*, *Harītakī*, *Triphalā*, and *Cyavanaprāśa*. *Āchārya Śārṅgadhara* further advised that specific *Rasāyana* regimens should be adopted according to different age groups to maintain fitness, vigour, and longevity. It is noteworthy that *Rasāyana* therapy is primarily preventive rather than curative. It is generally administered after disease management to prevent recurrence and to repair or rejuvenate tissues that have been impaired during illness. Additionally, it can be prescribed to healthy individuals as a prophylactic measure to enhance resilience and reduce susceptibility to diseases. According to Ayurveda, the body is sustained by the *Sapta Dhātus* (seven fundamental tissues), which ensure nourishment, structure, and growth. Disturbances in the balance of these *dhātus* are regarded as the root cause of various disorders. By preserving the health and equilibrium of these *dhātus*, *Rasāyana* therapy significantly contributes to overall wellness, disease prevention, and longevity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Types of *Rasayana*

Types of *Rasayana* in Ayurveda

Ayurveda classifies *Rasayana* therapies into several categories, each with a distinct purpose in promoting health, longevity, and overall well-being:

1. **Kamya Rasayana (Health Promoters)**

These *Rasayanas* are intended to enhance normal health by improving vitality, immunity, and general well-being. They are further subdivided into:

- **Pranakamya** – promoters of vitality and longevity.
- **Medhakamya** – enhancers of intelligence and memory.
- **Srikamya** – promoters of radiance and healthy complexion.

2. **Nimittika Rasayana (Disease-Specific)**

This type is prescribed for the treatment of particular diseases and is administered for a limited duration.

3. ***Ajasrika Rasayana* (Dietary Rejuvenation)**

In this form, nourishing food substances are consumed regularly to maintain health and support the body's tissues. Examples include daily intake of **milk, ghee, and other wholesome foods**.

4. ***Medhya Rasayana* (Cognitive Enhancers)**

Special Rasayanas mentioned by *Acharya Charaka* for improving memory (*smriti*) and intellect (*medha*). Common examples are:

- *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*)
- *Mandukaparni* (*Centella asiatica*)
- *Jatamansi* (*Nardostachys jatamansi*)
- *Jyotishmati* (*Celastrus paniculatus*)
- *Shankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*)

5. ***Achara Rasayana* (Behavioural Rejuvenation)**

Unlike pharmacological therapies, this form emphasizes ethical conduct, lifestyle, and behaviour that contribute to rejuvenation. The principles include:

- Practicing calmness, nonviolence, and self-control.
- Avoiding alcohol misuse and sexual excess.
- Being gentle in speech and action.
- Cultivating patience, sincerity, kindness, humility, and cleanliness.
- Honoring teachers and deities, valuing spiritual practices, and maintaining discipline in sleep and work.
- Caring for the elderly and engaging in socially beneficial activities.

6. ***Kutipraveshika Rasayana* (Indoor Therapy)**

- *Kuti* means “chamber.” In this method, after purification by *Panchakarma*, the person is confined in a specially constructed hut or chamber and administered Rasayana formulations for a fixed period.¹
- This approach is highly systematic and controlled, aiming for deep rejuvenation.²

7. ***Vatatapika Rasayana* (Outdoor Therapy)**

- In this method, the person continues with routine daily activities while undergoing Rasayana treatment.
- It is more practical than *Kutipraveshika* and easier to follow for people in regular life settings.³

Eligibility and Ideal Conditions for Rasayana Therapy

The recommended age for undergoing *Rasayana Chikitsa* ranges from **16 to 90 years**. For optimal benefits, it is advised that the body be cleansed beforehand through mild purification procedures or, when necessary, appropriate *Panchakarma* therapies. The individual should be mentally stable, intelligent, and capable of exercising self-control over desires. Faith and confidence in the prescribed medicines and therapeutic process are considered essential for success. During the course of Rasayana therapy, the person must abstain from **alcohol, smoking, and other unhealthy habits**, as these can interfere with the rejuvenation process and reduce its effectiveness.⁴

Purpose of Rasayana:

Rasayana should be used for three purposes mainly-

- Maintaining health⁵
- Prevention of diseases and old age⁶
- To avoid the recurrence of diseases.

Effects of Rasayana Therapy

According to Ayurvedic physiology, *Rasayana* therapy enhances nutrition and rejuvenation in the body through three primary mechanisms:

1. Direct Action on Rasa (Nutrient Plasma)⁷
 - Certain Rasayana agents directly improve the nutritional quality of *rasa dhatu* (nutritional plasma).
 - Examples: Shatavari, milk, ghee.
2. By Strengthening Agni (Digestive Fire and Metabolism)⁸
 - Some Rasayanas act indirectly by enhancing *agni*, thereby improving digestion, metabolism, and assimilation of nutrients.
 - Examples: Bhallataka, Pippali.
3. By Regulating Srotas (Microcirculatory Channels)⁹
 - Other Rasayana agents function by maintaining the health of *srotas*, the body's microchannels responsible for nutrient transport and tissue nourishment.
 - Examples: Guggulu, Tulsi.

Among these, the second category—rejuvenation through metabolic and systemic remodelling—is the most complex. It requires strict supervision by an Ayurvedic physician and is carried out through *Kutipraveshika Rasayana*, where the individual undergoes therapy while residing in a specially prepared hut (*kuti*), isolated from routine activities.

Benefits of Rasayana Therapy¹⁰

Prevention of Degeneration and Disease

By nourishing the body's vital tissues—blood, lymph, muscle, fat, bone marrow, and semen—Rasayana therapy helps delay degenerative changes. This makes it particularly beneficial in managing chronic age-related conditions such as arthritis and other senile disorders.

Promotion of Longevity and Vitality

The primary aim of Rasayana Chikitsa is to preserve youth, vigour, and vitality while preventing premature ageing, weakness, and decline. It promotes not only a long and disease-free life but also enhances intelligence, radiance of complexion, generosity, physical strength, and sharpness of the senses.

Physiological and Psychological Support

Rasayana improves microcirculation, leading to the nourishment and development of high-quality tissues. It also supports elimination of toxins, strengthens Agni (digestive and metabolic power), and exhibits antioxidant, anti-stress, and anxiolytic (anti-anxiety) effects.

Need for Rejuvenation in Modern Life

In today's fast-paced lifestyle, people often suffer from excessive physical and mental strain, irregular meal timings, and high stress levels. The widespread use of gadgets, sedentary habits, and lack of physical activity further aggravate the problem. Unhealthy addictions—such as alcohol, smoking, narcotics, overeating, stale and preservative-rich food, and excessive indulgence in sleep or sex—lead to a decline in dhatu bala (tissue strength) and ojas (vital energy), along with imbalance of doshas.

As a result, many individuals experience repeated illnesses, chronic fatigue, weakness, depression, and premature ageing. Rasayana therapy offers a holistic solution to counter these lifestyle-induced imbalances, restore vitality, and promote overall well-being.

DISCUSSION

Health is a complex state that depends on the harmonious functioning of numerous physiological, biochemical, and hormonal processes. For true well-being, these systems must remain in constant balance. Ancient Ayurvedic scholars described the anatomy and physiology of the human body with remarkable depth and accuracy, presenting health as more than just the absence of disease. According to Ayurveda, a living being is an integration of the body, senses, mind, and soul. A person is considered truly healthy when there is equilibrium of the Doshas (functional principles), Dhatus (tissues), and Malas (metabolic wastes), along with a state of clarity in the senses, stability of the mind, and spiritual contentment. Thus, health in Ayurveda is defined as a holistic balance of the physical, mental, sensory, and spiritual dimensions of life.¹¹ Ayurveda identifies its objectives in two fundamental ways: to preserve health and to cure disease. For maintaining well-being, Ayurveda provides detailed guidelines on daily routine (*Dinacharya*), nightly routine (*Ratricharya*), seasonal regimen (*Ritucharya*), ethical conduct (*Sadvritta*), and periodic purification through seasonal Panchakarma. These principles encompass lifestyle, diet, exercise, and both personal and social hygiene. In addition, Ayurveda describes a specialised branch known as *Rasayana Chikitsa*, which is primarily aimed at enhancing immunity, revitalising metabolism, and maintaining overall health. Beyond preventive care,

Rasayana also holds therapeutic value in managing several modern chronic and degenerative diseases, including cancer, diabetes, atherosclerosis, dyslipidaemia, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, and tuberculosis.¹² Extensive research has been carried out on *Rasayana* therapies to interpret their relevance in contemporary times. However, being a holistic science, Ayurveda cannot be entirely explained or validated through the reductionist framework of modern science. Despite this limitation, numerous studies on *Rasayana* formulations have shown promising results. They have been found effective in managing psycho-somatic stress, convulsive disorders, and epilepsy. Furthermore, *Rasayana* therapy has demonstrated significant benefits in reducing nervousness, anxiety, and mental fatigue, while supporting mental clarity, stability, and emotional balance.¹³ Most contemporary research on *Rasayana* therapy has centred on its immune-modulating and antioxidant properties. Findings suggest that *Rasayana* formulations help regulate both the endocrine and immune systems while preserving the body's natural auto-regulatory mechanisms. It has also been reported that *Rasayana* drugs may prevent cyclophosphamide-induced leukopenia and reduce generalised weakness, thereby supporting resilience and recovery in individuals undergoing stress or medical treatment.¹⁴ *Rasayana* therapy protects the body through multiple mechanisms. It strengthens the immune system, neutralises harmful free radicals, and enhances cellular detoxification. It also repairs damaged cells, stimulates the renewal of tissues, and replaces weak or mutated cells with healthy ones. Altogether, these actions contribute to rejuvenation, disease prevention, and long-term vitality.¹⁵

Mode of Action of *Rasayana*

Ayurveda describes the human body as a system sustained by the harmonious balance of Dosha (functional principles), Dhatu (tissues), and Mala (waste products). The maintenance of this equilibrium is essential for health and longevity. Any disturbance among these components can lead to disease and degeneration. Another vital factor influencing health is the quality of diet and the strength of Agni, the digestive and metabolic fire. Agni is responsible for digesting, absorbing, and assimilating food into a usable form of energy and nutrition. When Agni functions properly, the food consumed is converted into a nutrient essence known as Ahara-Rasa, which is the first *Dhatu* formed after digestion.^{16,17,18,19}

CONCLUSION

Rasāyana represents a distinctive branch of Ayurveda dedicated to rejuvenation, vitality, and health promotion, achieved through an integrated approach of herbal formulations, dietary measures, and lifestyle regulation. Classical Ayurvedic literature documents a wide range of *Rasāyana* preparations, many of which have gained scientific recognition for their therapeutic potential. Contemporary studies suggest that *Rasāyana* therapy plays a valuable role in the management of chronic and degenerative conditions such as atherosclerosis, diabetes, cancer, persistent inflammatory states, infectious diseases, and neurodegenerative disorders. The wide-ranging benefits of *Rasāyana* are linked to its pharmacological properties, which include immunomodulatory, adaptogenic, antioxidant, anabolic, nutritive, and anti-ageing effects. By strengthening immunity, reducing oxidative damage, supporting cellular repair, and slowing degenerative processes,

Rasāyana therapy functions as both a preventive and restorative intervention. Ultimately, it contributes to the preservation of vitality, enhancement of life quality, and promotion of healthy longevity.

REFERENCES

1. Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji edited Charaka Samhita of Acharya Agnivesha with Ayurveda Dipika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Chaukambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Edition, Chikitsasthana, chapter no: 1-4, 2011; 30-35.
2. Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji edited Charaka Samhita of Acharya Agnivesha with Ayurveda Dipika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Chaukambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Edition, Chikitsasthana, chapter no: 1-1, 2011; 16.
3. Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji edited Charaka Samhita of Acharya Agnivesha with Ayurveda Dipika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Chaukambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Edition, Chikitsasthana, chapter no: 1-1, 2011; 17-20.
4. Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji edited Charaka Samhita of Acharya Agnivesha with Ayurveda Dipika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Chaukambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Edition, Chikitsasthana, chapter no: 1-4, 2011; 30-35.
5. Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji edited Charaka Samhita of Acharya Agnivesha with Ayurveda Dipika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Chaukambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Edition, Chikitsasthana, chapter no: 1-1, 2011; 5.
6. Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji edited Charaka Samhita of Acharya Agnivesha with Ayurveda Dipika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Chaukambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Edition, Chikitsasthana, chapter no: 1-1, 2011; 79.
7. Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji edited Charaka Samhita of Acharya Agnivesha with Ayurveda Dipika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Chaukambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Edition, Chikitsasthana, chapter no: 1-4, 2011; 15.
8. Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji edited Charaka Samhita of Acharya Agnivesha with Ayurveda Dipika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Chaukambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Edition, Chikitsasthana, chapter no: 1-2, 2011; 17.
9. Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji edited Charaka Samhita of Acharya Agnivesha with Ayurveda Dipika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Chaukambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Edition, Chikitsasthana, chapter no: 1-3, 2011; 35.
10. Vaidya Jadavji Trikamji edited Charaka Samhita of Acharya Agnivesha with Ayurveda Dipika commentary of Chakrapanidatta, Chaukambha Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi, Edition, Chikitsasthana, chapter no: 1-1, 2011; 7-8.
11. Ambikadutta Shastri, Shusruta Samhita, Edited with Ayurveda Tattva Sandipika, Sutrasthana, Chapter 15 verse 48, Chaukambha Sanskrita Sansthan, Varanasi, 2003, p.64.18

- 12.R. Govindarajan, M. Vijayakumar, P. Pushpangadan, Antioxidant approach to disease management and the role of Rasayana herbs of Ayurveda, Journal of Ethnopharmacology: 99 (2005);165178
- 13.Puri, H.S., 2003. 'Rasayana'-Ayurvedic herbs for longevity and rejuvenation. Taylor and Francis, London.
- 14.Kumar, P., Kuttan, R.V., Kuttan, G.G,1994. Chemoprotective action of 'Rasayana' against cyclophosphamide toxicity. Tumori 80, 306308.
- 15.Vayalil PK, Kuttan G Kuttan R. Rasayanas: evidence for the concept of prevention of diseases. Am J Chin Med, 2002: 30(1):155-71
- 16.Ambikadutta Shastri, Shusruta Samhita, Edited with Ayurveda Tattva Sandipika, Sutrasthana, Chapter 15 verse 3, Chaukhambha Sanskrita Sansthana, Varanasi, 2003, p.56.
- 17.Kashinath Shastri,'Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi, Charaka Samhita with Elaborated Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Chikitsasthana, Chapter 15 verse 3-5, Chaukhambha Bharti Academy, Varanasi, 1998, p. 452-453.
- 18.Kashinath Shastri, Gorakha Natha Chaturvedi, Charaka Samhita with Elaborated Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, Chikitsasthana, Chapter 1-1 verse 7-8, Chaukhambha Bharti Academy, Varanasi, 1998, p. 5.