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## **AYURVEDA SAMHITAS DESCRIPTION ON RASAYANA DRUGS AND THEIR THERAPEUTIC INDICATION**

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### **Abstract**

*Ayurveda* is the oldest healthcare system which is still emerging as a reality in today's life. It has two prime roles i.e. preservation of the health and treatment of ailments. Due to the continuous changing lifestyle patterns, improper *Ahara* and *Vihara*; stress, etc. there is a negative impact on mental, physical and emotional well being of the individual. *Ayurveda* aims for complete well being of an individual. Humans have a natural tendency to aspire for long and disease free life. To achieve this, there must be a rejuvenating system to protect the ageing and bodily changes. *Rasayana* is one among the branches of *Ashtang Ayurveda*. There are various classical literature of *Ayurveda* which covers the *Rasayanas* under various headings of definition, types, indications etc. *Charakasamhita* and *Chikitsasthana* have given foremost place to the *Rasayana*. *Sushruta Samhita*, *Uttar Tantra*, *Astang Hridaya*, etc. have incorporated several number *Rasayanas* for medicinal use. *Rasayana Chikitsa* helps in attaining long and disease free life; memory, intelligence, youthfulness, physical strength, etc.

**Key-words:-** *Rasayana, Chikitsa, Health, Ayurveda, Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita.*

## Introduction

There are many references of *Rasayana Chikitsa* available in *Vedas* especially *Atharvaveda*. *Rasayana chikitsa* (rejuvenation) is the branch of *Ashtang Ayurveda*. According to *Ayurveda*, *Rasa* signifies the preservation, transformation, and replenishment of energy. The word *Rasayana* is derived from 'Ras' and 'Ayana' where *Rasa* indicate the 'nourishing fluid' and *Ayana* means 'to circulate'. Hence, *Rasayana* is a substance which amplifies the circulation of the vital essence of life and balances *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Agni* and bring them in state of equilibrium<sup>3</sup>. It helps in attaining *Rasaadi dhatus*, improves nutritional status, maintain youthfulness, increase longevity, intellectual capability and physical strength.<sup>[1]</sup>

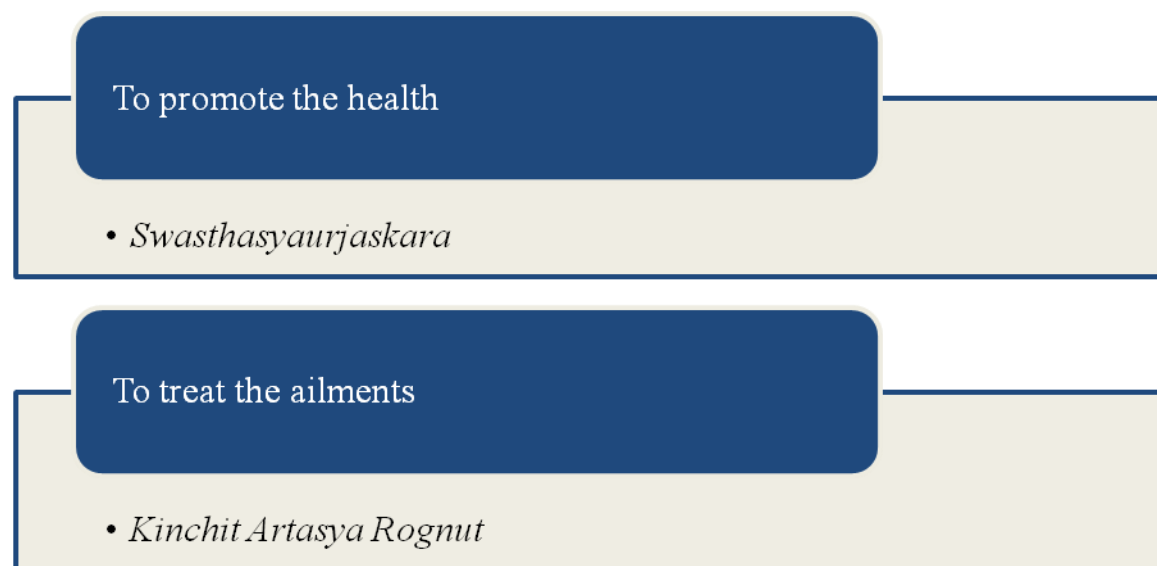
In *Ayurveda*, the word *Ayu* stands for the combination of the body, sense organs, mind and soul. Ageing is a natural physiological process characterized by gradual weakening of the vital functions, decline in metabolic processes, etc. *Rasayana Chikitsa* boosts the *Ojas* and immune system helping a healthy person maintain good health and to re-establish the physical or mental health.<sup>[2]</sup>

*Rasayan chikitsa* comprises of techniques of preparing different formulations to provide the anti-ageing effects, enhance the power of vital organs, strengthening resistance and immunity against disease and to gain good health, wealth and salvation. The mode of action of *Rasayana* is through nutritional plasma, digestion, metabolism and micro-circulation in the body.<sup>[3]</sup> Therapeutically the dosage and mode administration is considered as important to get the best benefits.

## According to *Charaka samhita*

*Charaka Samhita* is considered as one the oldest text of *Ayurveda* in which wide information is available about the *Rasayanas*. *Acharya Charaka* has explained *Rasayana* in *Chikitsasthana* in four *Paadas* such as *Abhayaamalakiyarasayanapada*, *Pranakamiyarasayanapaada*, *Karaprachitiyarasayanapaada*, *Ayurvedasamutthanrasayanapaada*.<sup>[4]</sup>

*Acharya Charaka* has described the *Rasayana Chikitsa* in detail with physiological, pharmacological, Therapeutic and clinical aspects. He has correlated the fundamental principles of *Ayurveda*, *Rassamvahan*, *Dhatu*, *Agni*, *Dosha* and *Prakriti*. He had introduced various drugs of single, compound, herbal, and mineral nature. In the *Chikitsasthana*, *Bhesaja* (drugs) are classified into two categories as depicted in **figure 1**. Some drugs are useful for healthy person which promotes health and longevity. Some drugs helps in curing various diseases. *Vayasthapana Varga* consists of ten drugs i.e. *Amrita*, *Abhaya*, *Amalaki*, *Aparajita*, *Rasna*, *Jeevanti*, *Shatavari*, *Mandukaparni*, *Sthira* and *Punarnava*.<sup>[5]</sup> According to *Acharya Charaka*, *Soma* and *Amalaki* are the best.<sup>[6]</sup> There is a group of nine drugs mentioned in the *Chikitsa sthana* which is considered to be given by *Indra*. These are highly potent and sustainable to *Rishis* only. Some of the drugs under this group are *Brahma Suvarchala*, *Aditya Parni*, *Nari*, *Kashthagodha*, *Sarpa*, *Soma*, *Padma* etc.



**Figure 1** □Types of *Bhesaja* (medicines)

#### According to *Sushruta Samhita*

*Acharya Sushruta* has explained *Rasayana* as *Sarvopaghatashamiyamrasayanam*, *Medhaayushkiyam Rasayanam*, *Swabhavavyadhipratishedhaniurrasayanam*, *Niruttasantapanium Rasayana*. The views of *Acharya Sushruta* are same as *Acharya Charaka* in many ways for the *Rasayanachikitsa*. But *Rasayanas* were not emphasized much by

*Acharya Sushruta* as *Sushruta Samhita* primarily deals with surgical discipline. *Acharya Sushruta* has not emphasized on specialized regimen of *Rasayana chikitsa* like *Vatatapika* and *Kutipravesika* procedure. In *Sushruta Samhita*, the use of *Ahara* as *Rasayana* treatment is described in detail. He has classified *Rasayana* into *Kamya Rasayana* and *Naimitiika Rasayana*. *Acharya Sushruta* has added more *Rasayana* drugs in *Samhita* such as *Vidanga*, *Kashmari*, *Mandukaparni*, *Brahmi*, *Vacha*, etc.<sup>[7]</sup> But certain drugs like *Amalaki*, *Pippali* and *Shankhapushpi* are not described in *Sushruta Samhita*. Some *Rasayana* mentioned in *Sushruta Samhita* are *Adityaparni*, *Amalaka* with *Svarna* and *Madhu*, *Ayurvardhaka*, *Rasayana*, *Bala Kalpa*, *Ajagari*, *Go Chandana*, *Mohanika*, *Madhu* and *Svarna Bijaka Kalpa*, *Bilva Rasayana*, *Tilabeeja*, *Brahma Ghrita*, *Nilotpala*, *Yashtimadhu*, *Padmakabeeja*, *Priyangu*, *Laja*, *Madhu* with *Milk*, *Kashmarya Kalpa*, etc.

#### **According to *Acharya Dalhana***

*Dalhana* had also classified *Rasayanas* into two aspects i.e. *Kamya Rasayana* for healthy person and *Naimitiika Rasayana* for diseased person.<sup>[8]</sup>

#### **According to *Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Ashtanga Hridaya***

*Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* were written by *Acharya Vagbhata* in which some new *Rasayanas* were introduced. *Acharya Vagbhata* considered the young age group for selection as subjects in *Rasayana* therapy. These were the first texts where emphasis has been put on the use of *Rasayanas* in younger age groups and the importance of doing *Poorva karma* before the administration of *Rasayana* drugs has been mentioned.<sup>[9]</sup> Definition, types, modes of administration, age and various *Rasayanas* have been described in detail in *Uttaratantra*. Some *Rasayana* drugs mentioned are *Ashwagandha Churn*, *Bhringaraj Swarasa*, *Guduchi Swarasa*, *Bala Rasayana*, *Brahmi Rasayana*, *Haritaki Ghrita*, etc.<sup>[10]</sup> He had advised the *Vata Prakriti* people to consume milk, *Pitta Prakriti* people to take *Ghee*, the *Kapha Prakriti* people to take *Madhu* (honey) regularly before meals to prevent the ageing effects. *Acharya Vagbhata* had also removed the highly potent drugs which are difficult to procure by the common man such as *Soma*.<sup>[11]</sup>

### **According to *Chakradutta Chikitsa Sangraha***

It is written by *Chakrapanidutta* and has set a historical land mark in the development of medicine in India. He has considered *Sanshodhana* therapy as a *Poorvakarma* for *Rasayanachikitsa*. He has specially mentioned about *Ritu Haritaki* for the use of *Haritaki* during different seasons. Various *Rasayanas* such as *Chyanvanprash*, *VardhmanPippaliRasayan*, *LohRasayan* etc. have been described by *Chakrapanidutta*.<sup>[12]</sup>

### **According to *Vangasena Samhita***

*Chikitsasara Sangraha* is also known as *Vangasena Samhit* composed by *Acharya Vangasena*. It deals with description of diseases and their detailed treatment. *Vangasena* has contributed some special formulations to the *Rasayana* therapy in *Rasayanadhikara*. He has included *Rasayanas* according to the *Doshas* (*AmritakhyaRasayana*, *Vatakaphashamana*), *Vyadhi* (*Amavata*, *Vatarakta*, *Sirahshoola*, *Grahanihara Rasayanas*) etc. in his work.<sup>[13]</sup>

### **According to *Sarangadhara Samhita***

*Sharngadhara samhita* clearly defines *Rasayana* as a measure which prevents aging and disease and thus promoting healthy life. He has included *Amrita*, *Rudanti*, *Guggulu* and *Haritaki* under the category of important *Rasayanadrugs*, and *Triphalachurna*, *YogarajaGuggulu*, *Kaishora Guggulu*, etc. under the important formulations.<sup>[14]</sup> This classical text deals with *Kayachikitsa* thus does not have a separate chapter on *Rasayana*.

### **According to *Yogaraj Ratnakara***

*Yoga Ratnakara* is one of the most renowned treatises of *Ayurveda* containing various medicinal formulations some of them are still unexplored. It has a separate chapter for *Rasayanas* termed as *RasayanaVignana-Uttarardha* containing description of *Taila Rasayanaprayoga*, *Shitalajala*, *Ghruta*, *Kshira*, *Vardhamana Bhallataka*, *GandhakaRasayana* etc.<sup>[15]</sup> It provides the details about *Madhya Rasayana*.

## Therapeutic usage of various *Rasayana* drugs

- Immunomodulator- *Rasayana* drugs alter the immune response by stimulating or reducing the ability of the immune system to produce antibodies. Some immunomodulator *Rasayana* drugs are *Tulsi*, *Guduchi*, *Shatavari* etc.<sup>[16]</sup>
- Adaptogen- It is the property of some *Rasayana* drugs to increase the ability of an organism to adapt to environmental factors, such as injury, aging, or anxiety.<sup>[17]</sup> Some adaptogenic *Rasayana* drugs are *Ashvagandha*, *Tulsi*, *Amalaki*, *Guduchi*, *Shatavari* etc.
- Antioxidant- Some of the *Rasayana* drugs such as *Guggula*, *Amla*, *Ashvagandha*, *Triphala*, *Haridra* etc. inhibit the rate of oxidation in bodily cells thus acts as antioxidants. Antioxidant property prevents coronary heart disease, diabetes mellitus, ageing, etc.
- Anti-ageing - Ageing reduces vision, memory, muscle power, homeostasis and immune function which results in infection, digestive problem and malignancy. The lipid peroxidation contributes to the ageing process. Certain *Rasayana* drugs like *Ashvagandha* inhibit lipid peroxidation and also inhibit oxidative protein modification. Thus *Rasayana* drugs also act as anti-ageing agents by stimulating the immune system, enhancing cellular detoxification; repair damaged non-proliferating cells, inducing cell proliferation and replacing the damaged tissues with fresh cells and tissues.
- Brain- tonic *Rasayanas* - *Rasayanas* retard brain ageing and help in regeneration of neural tissues, reducing stress and enhancing memory. Example- *Sankhpushpi*, *Ashvagandha*, *Brahmi*, *Mandukaparni* etc. *Ashvagandha* is used to treat various central nervous system disorders such as epilepsy, stress and neurodegenerative diseases, cerebral ischemia, drug addiction, etc.
- Anti-ulcer - *Shatavari*, *Brahmi*, *Mandookparni* have gastro-duodenal ulcer protective activity.<sup>[18]</sup>
- Anti-giardial *Rasayanas* - *Pippali* and *Palash* *Rasayana* are used to treat giardiasis.
- Anti-cancer *Rasayana*- *Rasayana* formulations such as *Brahma* *Rasayana*, *Ashvagandha* *Rasayana*, *Narasimha* *Rasayana*, *Amrithaprasam* and *Chyavanaprash* have anti-metastatic property.

## Conclusion

Ageing is a natural physiological process which is characterized by gradual weakening of the vital functions and lowering of metabolic process in the body. Humans have always desired to live long and healthy life. *Rasayana Chikitsa* is one of the important branches of *Ashtanga Ayurveda*, formulated to improve the health of the healthy people and at the same time to cure the disease by promoting the strength and vitality. There are number of drugs mentioned as *Rasayana* in various texts of *Ayurveda*. *Charaka Samhita*, one the earliest texts of *Ayurveda*, gave extensive information of *Rasayanas* and rejuvenation. *Sushruta* and *Dalhana* gave the classification of *Rasayanain* their classical texts. Apart from classical *Ayurvedic* texts, there are various evidences of benefits of *Rasayana* drugs arising through scientific studies. Thus we should focus on utilizing this bundle of knowledge regarding health and longevity.

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