



## Review Article

### RASAYANA AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN AYURVEDA

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#### ABSTRACT

*Rasayan Tantra* is one of the most important branches of Ayurveda. It helps to delay the ageing process, helps to provide good strength and offer excellent immunity from various infections. It also maintains good digestion, metabolism, cardiac and mental health. *Rasayan* science also deals with measures, medicines, treatments which bring about delay in ageing process and also helps in the maintenance of health in old age, apart from providing strength and immunity. *Rasayan* help in the formation of best quality *Dhatu*s/tissues and also support the channels which help in the formation and transportation of tissues and also the nutrition needed to form these tissues from one place of the body to the other. These medicines delay the ageing process by reducing the oxidative stress in the cells of body and central nervous system, thereby promoting the longevity and disease-free body. *Rasayana* have broad spectrum role as they are anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer, hepatoprotective, renoprotective, neuroprotective, cardiotoxic and are excellent immunomodulators. They can be co-related with anti-oxidants in Western Medicine.

#### INTRODUCTION

*Rasayana shastra* is one of the eight branches of Ayurveda. Aim of Ayurveda is to maintain the health of healthy individual and to cure the diseased one. The major benefit of *Rasayana* is in its rejuvenating therapy which increases the body resistance i.e. immunity thereby promoting and maintaining the health of individuals. This *Rasayana* therapy also prevents the effects of premature ageing, increases longevity, improves mental and physical health, intellectual competence, maintaining youth, increases luster, body complexion, promotes voice quality, maintains functions of body and sense organs.

**Meaning of *Rasayana***- The term *Rasayana* is consists of two words – *Rasa* and *Ayana*. *Rasa* means the finest part of fluid formed after primary metabolism of food. *Ayana* means going, circulating etc.<sup>[1]</sup> That which is beneficial for the *Rasadi Dhatus* and also good for the

*Ayanas* or channels through which those tissues flow from one part of body to other is called *Rasayan*. In other words, medicines which are beneficial to the *Rasadi dhatus* and their *Ayanas* are called *Rasayanas*.

#### Definition of *Rasayana*

1. *Rasayan* is that by which old age and diseases are averted.<sup>[2]</sup>
2. *Rasayan Tantra* is one which deals with delaying of ageing process, increasing intellect and strength, prolongation of life and curing the disorders.<sup>[3]</sup>

*Bheshaja* (medicines) in our Ayurvedic literature are classified into 2 groups:

1. *Swasthya Oorjaskar*- Which promotes strength and immunity in a healthy person.
2. *Roganashak Chikitsa* - Which cure a disease in an already diseased person.

**Classification of *Rasayan***: *Rasayana* therapy is classified into various types by different *Acharayas* and are as follows:

#### A. On the basis of mode of administration

*Rasayan* Therapy has been classified by Charaka in two groups:

1. *Kutiprareshik Rasayan* (indoor regimen)

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## 2. Vataatpik (outdoor regimen)

**Kutiprareshik Rasayan:** This method of *Rasayan* is comfortable for all seasons. In this method patient has to be placed in a *Kuti Trigarbhakuti*. That *Kuti* should build in an auspicious ground, facing eastward/northward direction and in a locality inhabited by King, Physician, Brahmans and Saints. It should have sufficient space area, height, a small opening, thick walls and should be impermeable for undesirable sound, etc., free from women, equipped with necessary accessories.<sup>[4]</sup>

**Vatatpik:** It is a second type of *Rasayan* which can be taken even if the individual is exposed to the Sun and Air. In this procedure person remains in his natural surroundings and continuous to perform his daily activities under the therapy.

**Kamya Rasayan is further subdivided into following three types**

S.No.	Type of Rasayan	Purpose of Rasayan	Drugs Used
1.	Prana Kamya	For promotion of life vitality and longevity	Triphala rasayan, Haritaki rasayan
2.	Medha Kamya	For promotion of intellect and mental functions	Brahmi, Sankhapushpi
3.	Sri Kamya	For promotion of strength, vigour, complexion and luster	Amalaki Rasayan

## C. On the basis of content of Rasayana

1. *Aushadha Rasayana*– Based on *Aushadha* (drugs/medicines used for *Rasayana* purpose)
2. *Ahara Rasayana*– Based on diet and nutrition.
3. *Aachar Rasayana*– Based on conduct and behaviour. *Achara Rasayana* is a non-pharmacological way of acquiring the *Rasayana* effect. In this type of *Rasayana*, the ways of living, role of *Satvikka* diet, what to do and what to avoid. Person who is truthful, free from anger, abstaining from wine and women, non- violent, non- exerting, calm, sweet spoken, engaged in *Japa* (repeating incantation) and cleanliness, perseverant, observing charity, penance, worshipping Gods, cow, brahmanas, teach the observing vigil and sleep in balance, using regularly ghee and milk, well behaved, simple having senses concentrated on spiritualism, keeping company with elder, devoted to holy scriptures.

## Contraindications of Rasayan

1. *Anatmavana*– Person who don't have proper knowledge.
2. *Alasi*– Person who does not follow the rule.
3. *Daridra*– Person who cannot afford the costly medicines.
4. *Vyasani*– Person who are addicted to alcohol etc.
5. *Papi*– Person who do not follow their religion and their duties properly.

## B. On the basis of purpose of Rasayana

Acharya Dalhana mentioned this type of classification<sup>5</sup>

1. *Ajasrika Rasayan* – It is a type of *Rasayan* which should be taken regularly as food e.g., milk, ghee etc.
2. *Naimittika Rasayan* – It is a type of *Rasayan* which should be taken for specific time or disease e.g., *Kushta- Bhallataka rasayan*, *Unmada- Medhya rasayan*.
3. *Kamya Rasayan* – This type of *Rasayan* is used to fulfil a desire to serve a special purpose (*Kama*/desire). It is used in a healthy person for good health e.g., *Medhya rasayan* to promote mental functions.

## Rasayana for Various Systems of Body

1. Circulatory System: *Amalaki*, *Dhatri Louha*, *Suvarna makshika bhasma*.
2. Digestive System: *Pippali* (*Piper longum*), *Haritaki* (*Terminalia chebula*), *Bhallataka* (*Semecarpus anacardium*).
3. Excretory System: *Triphala*, *Kutaj* (*Holarrhena antidysenterica*), *Vidanga* (*Embelia ribes*).
4. Lactation System: *Shatavari* (*Asparagus racemosus*), milk.
5. Menstrual System: *Ashoka* (*Saraca ashoka*), *Lodhra* (*Symplocos racemosa*).
6. Nervous System: *Aswanganda* (*Withania somnifera*), *Swarna bhasma*, *Sankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*).
7. Reproductive System: *Aswagandha* (*Withania somnifera*), *Shweta musli* (*Asparagus adsendens*).
8. Respiratory System: *Vardhamana pippali*, *Chyavanprasha*.
9. Skeletal System: *Vansalochana* (*Bambusa arundinacea*), *Shukti bhasma*, *Kukkutandatwak*.
10. Sweat System: *Kupilu* (*Nux vomica*)

## Charaka Samhita

1. Promotes longevity.
2. Improved mental and intellectual competence.
3. Provides immunity against diseases.

4. Delays ageing process.
5. Improvement in the complexion and luster of skin.
6. Improves voice quality.
7. Increases strength of body, motor and sense organs (*Indriyas*).
8. Provides *Vaksiddhi* (command over speech).
9. Production of good quality of *Sharirika dhatus* (from *Rasa* to *Shukra dhatu*).<sup>[6]</sup>

**Sushruta Samhita**

1. Sustains age and youthfulness.
2. Increase in life span.

3. Increase intellectual capacity and strength.
4. Freedom from diseases.
5. *Sarva upaghatashamaniya* i.e., cures all ailments and problems.
6. Acts as rejuvenator and general restorative treatment.<sup>[7]</sup>

**Sharangadhar Samhita**

*Rasayana* destroys senility and diseases. Acharya Sharangadhar mentioned that every individual is at risk of losing one of the following properties at every decade.<sup>[8]</sup>

**Table 1: Age wise Distribution of Rasayan Drugs**

Age (years)	Decade Wise Decline	Desirable Rasayan Drugs
1 - 10	<i>Balyan</i> - Childhood	<i>Vaca</i> ( <i>Acorus calamus</i> ), <i>Kasmari</i> ( <i>Gmelina arborea</i> ), <i>Svarna</i> ( <i>Aurum</i> )
11 - 20	<i>Vridhhi</i> - Growth	<i>Kasmari</i> ( <i>Gmelina arborea</i> ), <i>Bala</i> ( <i>Sida cardifolia</i> ), <i>Aswagandha</i> ( <i>Withania somnifera</i> )
21 - 30	<i>Chhavi</i> - Luster	<i>Amalaki</i> ( <i>Emblica officinalis</i> ), <i>Lauha rasayan</i>
31 - 40	<i>Medha</i> – Sharpness in perception	<i>Shankhapushpi</i> ( <i>Convolvulus pluricaulis</i> ), <i>Yastimadhu</i> ( <i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> ), <i>Guduci</i> ( <i>Tinospora cardifolia</i> ), <i>Aswagandha</i> ( <i>Withania somnifera</i> )
41 - 50	<i>Twak</i> – Skin and appendages	<i>Bhringaraja</i> ( <i>Eclipta alba</i> ), <i>Bakuchi</i> ( <i>Psoralea corylifolia</i> ), <i>Priyala</i> ( <i>Buchanania lanzen</i> ), <i>Haridra</i> ( <i>Curcuma longa</i> )
51 - 60	<i>Drishti</i> – Visual acuity	<i>Triphala ghrta</i> , <i>Saptamrita loha</i>
61 - 70	<i>Shukra</i> - Fertility	<i>Kapikacchu</i> ( <i>Mucuna pruriens</i> ), <i>Aswagandha</i> ( <i>Withania somnifera</i> ), <i>Krishna musli</i> ( <i>Curculigo orchoides</i> ), milk, <i>Ghrta</i> , etc.,
71 - 80	<i>Vikram</i> – Valour and Courage	-
81 - 90	<i>Buddhi</i> – Cumulative intellect	-
91 - 100	<i>Karmaindriya</i> – Physical capacities	This and above two groups are not fit for <i>Rasayan karma</i>

**Naimittika Rasayan Drugs**

S.No.	Diseases	Drugs Used
1.	Eye diseases	<i>Jyotismati</i> , <i>Triphala</i> , <i>Shatavari</i> , <i>Yastimadhu</i>
2.	Heart diseases	<i>Shalaparni</i>
3.	Skin infections and <i>Kushtha</i> (leprosy)	<i>Tuvraka</i> , <i>Bhallataka</i> , <i>Vidanga</i> , <i>Somaraja</i> , <i>Gandhak</i>
4.	<i>Granthi</i> and <i>Gulma</i>	<i>Pippali</i> , <i>Bhallataka</i>
5.	<i>Yakshma</i>	<i>Rasona</i> , <i>Nagabhala</i> , <i>Shilajatu</i> , <i>Pippaladi</i>
6.	<i>Pandu</i>	<i>Loha</i>
7.	<i>Shwasa</i>	<i>Agastya Rasayan</i> , <i>Bhallataka</i> .
8.	<i>Amavata</i>	<i>Amrita</i> , <i>Bhallataka</i>
9.	<i>Vata Vyadhi</i>	<i>Rasona</i> , <i>Guggulu</i> , <i>Bala</i> , <i>Nagbala</i> .

10.	<i>Prameha</i>	<i>Shilajatu, Haridra, Amalaki.</i>
11.	<i>Medoroga</i>	<i>Guggulu, Haritaki.</i>
12.	<i>Raktagata Vata</i>	<i>Rasona, Bala, Rasna, Medha rasayana</i>
13.	<i>Nimna Raktachap</i>	<i>Kasturi, Kupilu</i>
14.	<i>Shitapitta</i>	<i>Kasturi, Kupilu.</i>

### Mode of Action of Rasayan Drugs

Acharya Sushruta mentioned definition of healthy individual as one who has equilibrium of doshas, normal functioning of *Agni*, normal condition of dhatus along with the calmness of soul, sense organs and mind. Most of the *Rasayan* medicines have *Madhura rasa*, *Guru*, *Snigdha* and *Sheeta gunas* as properties, act at the level of *Rasa* by promoting the nutritional value of the *rasa* which results in quality production of *Dhatus*. *Rasayan* drugs possessing *Ushna*, *Laghu*, *Ruksha Guna* and *Katu*, *Tikta kashaya rasa* act at the level of *Agni*. *Rasayana* act at the level of *Agni* to enhance the nutritional quality of *Ahara- Rasa* and helps in better circulation and assimilation of the nutrients at the cellular level.

The *Rasayana* drugs with *Katu*, *Tikta*, *Kashaya rasa*, *Vishada*, *Ruksha*, *Laghu guna*; *Ushna veerya* and *Katu vipaka* may cause *Srotoshodana*. *Rasayan* medicines also influence *Oja* and are supposed to induce *Bala* and *Vyadhikshamatva* (immunity).

The concepts of *Bala*, *Ojas* and *Vyadi kshamatva* explain the ancient way of understanding the innate and induced immunity and immune response in a comprehensive way. The *Rasayana* therapy explains the methods of enhancing immune response and bringing out immunomodulation effectively. Ayurveda medicines target towards enhancing body's resistance to disease causing agent rather than attacking the agent itself.

### Age for Administration of Rasayan

*Rasayan Aushadhis* are indicated in *Balya* and *Madhyavastha* of *Vaya*, as the *Dhatupaka* will be active during *Purva* (birth to 16 years) and *Madhya Vayas* (16 to 17 years). Acharya Sushruta has recommended this period of life as an ideal for administration of *Rasayan*.<sup>[9]</sup>

### Dose of Rasayan

It is not fixed as it varies from person to person according to *Agni*. The dose of *Rasayan* should not be inhibit the consumption of next food, when *Rasayan* is taken.

### Dosage Form

General dosage is in the form of *Lehya* (linctus). *Churnas* (powder) when used also formed into *Lehya* (linctus) form by mixing it with honey or ghee. Usually *Ksheera*/milk is the *Anupana/Sahapana* for *Rasayan*.

### Mode of Action in terms of Modern Medicine

1. Anti-oxidant
2. Immunomodulatory action
3. Haemopoietic effect
4. Adaptogenic action
5. Anabolic action
6. Nutritive functions
7. Neuroprotective action

**Free Radicle:** Free radicles are unstable molecules that can damage the DNA inside cells if they build up. They may play a role in a range of diseases and the visible signs of ageing. Scientists believe that free radicles can damage cells, including their DNA over time. This affects how cells work and how they replicate potentially leading to a range of health problems. Various studies have connected oxidative stress due to free radicles to:

Neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's Disease and other dementias.

Cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, Digestive disorders and cancer.

**Anti-oxidants:** Antioxidants are substances that lessen or prevent the effects of free radicles. They donate an electron to free radicles thereby reducing their reaction. Antioxidants are another type of molecule that helps remove free radicles. Plants such as fruits, vegetables and herbs are key sources of antioxidants.

**Immunomodulation:** Immunomodulation refers to the process of manipulating or modifying the body's immune system response. Immunomodulators are substances that can either stimulate or suppress the immune system.

**Adaptogenic:** Adaptogenic action refers to the ability of a substance to help the body adopt to and resist stress. Adaptogens can help regulate the body's stress response including hormone like cortisol, to prevent over stress or chronic fatigue. E.g., *Aswagandha*, ginseng.

**Nootrophic:** Nootrophics, also known as smart drugs or cognitive enhancers are substances that aim to improve cognitive functions like memory, attention and creativity e.g., caffeine, *Bacopa Monnieri*, *Panax Ginseng* *Ginkgo biloba*, etc.,

**Neuroprotective activity:** Neuroprotective activity refers to therapy's ability to prevent neuronal cell



death by interfering with the process that leads to dysfunction and death. Neuroprotective agents often work by addressing multiple mechanisms such as improving mitochondrial function, reducing oxidative stress and inhibiting inflammation. e.g., *Brahmi*, *Sankhapushpi*, *Haritaki*, *Haridra*, *Vaca*, etc.

## CONCLUSION

*Rasayana* provide wide variety of health benefits and are used as Immuno-modulators in Ayurveda. The tissues of our body form and provide the primary defense against internal forces (vitiated *Doshas*) and external forces (infections, etc.) causing the disease. Once the tissues become weak the body becomes susceptible to diseases. Weakening of tissues will also lower the immunity. The same effect can be seen where the channels forming and transporting the tissues are also blocked leading to inadequate or malformation of tissues. In this way, we can say that *Rasayanas* act like a shield that protect us from bacterial and viral infections and at the same time maintaining the digestive and metabolic health. Covid Pandemic was one of the best examples of this, in which grave prognosis and high mortality rate was seen in most of patients with low immunity, obesity, old age, diabetes and other health comorbidities. So, it is concluded that human immune system plays a key role in maintaining good health by showing resistance to various pathogens of varied etiology. It also prevents frequent hospital admissions in patients of respiratory diseases like COPD, etc., and other metabolic diseases. All these exacerbations or flare ups occur due to compromised immune system, poor nutrition and gut health. With the growing burden of diseases in today's world it is difficult to maintain healthy lifestyle along with wholesome diet. In this scenario Ayurvedic *Rasayana* treatment seems like a ground breaking approach to treat and manage various present health issues and can also prepare us for the unknown diseases of near future.

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