Review Article

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REJUVENATION THERAPY AND THEIR MODE OF ACTION: A DRAVYAGUNA INSIGHT

Sharma Ravindra*, Malviya Reeta, Nathani Sumit, Rama MurthyA, Khemani Naresh
Dept. of P.G. Studies in Dravya Guna, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

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*Corresponding author

E-mail: reeta1484@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The term Rasayana (Rasa+Ayana) essentially refers to nutrition and nourishment. More specifically it refers to bioavailability of nutrition. There can be many mechanisms through which a Rasayana remedy may accelerate the phenomenon of nourishment logically. It seems that a Rasayana may act at three levels of bio-system to promote nutrition; at the level of Agni by promoting the digestion and metabolism, at the level of Srotas by promoting the microcirculation and tissue perfusion and at the level of Rasa itself by acting as direct nutrition. Thus the Rasayana remedies act essentially on nutrition dynamics and rejuvenate the body and psyche. They are the powerful means of promotion of health, longevity and prevention of diseases. They sustain the Ojas status and promote Vyadhi-kshamatva i.e. immunity. Many Rasayana drugs of Ayurveda have been recently demonstrated to possess immuno-enhancer activity when tested on scientific parameters.

Keywords: Rasayana, Rejuvenation, Immuno-enhancer, Bioavailability, Longevity

INTRODUCTION

The term “Rasayana” used in Ayurveda, denotes a specific meaning. It consists of two words viz:

(1) Rasa (2) Ayana

Grammatically speaking the word “Rasayana” means the ways of obtaining good quality of Rasa. The word rasa also represents the seven Dhatus because they are all nourished by Rasa or Yield of Rasa. State of this Rasa in the body directly governs the state of health of an individual. So the means of obtaining optimum standard of Rasa is known to be Rasayana. Thus the Rasayana is a specialised type of treatment influencing the fundamental aspect of the organism viz. Agni and the Srotamsi leading to an overall improvement in the organism which leads to prevention of aging, bodily strength and improvement in mental faculties. Different classics of Ayurveda have defined rasayana in different words but with the same central theme.

Acarya Charaka has described Rasayana as the means of obtaining the best qualities of rasadi dhatus, (tissue elements). Best quality of Rasa leads to the formation of best qualities of other dhatus. Thus Rasayana is that process by which all the body tissues are nourished. Consequently Rasayana helps in regeneration, revival and revitalization of all body tissues/Dhatus.¹

Acarya Susruta has defined Rasayana as the measure which deals with the problems of young age, prolongs longevity, develops positive health and mental faculties and imparts resistance and immunity against diseases.²

Biological Effects of Rasayana Drugs

The concept of Rasayana had invoked a good deal of scientific enthusiasm way back in late 60's. Few herbs have been explored for their specific biological effects on different dimensions of health. Summarizing these studies, there is clinching evidence on the multi-dimensional effects of herbs with Rasayana attributes.

Anabolic Effects

Initial investigations of Rasayana drugs were designed to elicit their role on metabolism and tissue building. Herbs like Gambhari (*Gmelina arborea*) have shown a positive hint in this direction. Regular administration of such drugs was found to improve nitrogen balance and thus promote tissue building.

Anti-stress and Adaptogenic Effects

The process of living is subjected to many paradoxical situations. One such a paradox is stress. To be precise, every living organism in this universe is positioned in some or other kind of stressful situation. It is practically difficult to define the normal or abnormal values for stress and the quantum of it is highly variable. Over and above what matters the most is one's own threshold of tolerance. If you have a good tolerance, stress can do something really good for you. Therefore, we look at the means of improving our own tolerance and a Rasayana drug could come to your rescue to some extent.

Pharmacological investigations on drugs like Aswagandha (*Withania somnifera*) and Silajatu point to this unique biological effect of Rasayana drugs. Accordingly a drug with Rasayana quality can benefit the user in two distinct ways. Firstly, it can neutralize the negative effects of stress on physiology and restore homeostasis. This effect is generally termed as Anti-stress effect. Secondly a long term administration of such drugs may enhance one's own tolerance levels and help to cope-up with stress better. This particular effect is termed as Adaptogenic effect.

Immuno-modulatory Effect

Immunity (Vyadhi Kshamatva) is another biological phenomenon with varied implications. At its first place, immune system works to fight back any kind of external invasions on the body e.g. invasions by microbes. Immune system is a multi-locational, multi-component defense system guarding the body as a whole. Again as by today's understanding immune system may also play a

paradoxical role in the body. For example, when it works in a balanced manner it guards the body from invasions by microbes. When this defense system mechanism goes weak the body suffers infections. One may need a drug, which can stimulate the immune cells to work more effectively.

On the contrary, immune system under selected circumstances may go berserk and can start doubting our own tissues and invade them ruthlessly. Such an abnormal phenomenon may lead to development of a class of disease entities called "Auto Immune Disorder." In such kind of complex problems, one may need to suppress the hyper-acting immune complexes.

Rasayana herbs are being continuously explored for their effects on immune system. Available evidences show that, these drugs can be used to modulate the immune functions. At one hand they may work to enhance immune functions and build you firm deep within, or they might pacify an angry immunity cell to be in its limits on the other. Thus a Rasayana drug favors the host in both ways.³

Nootropic Effects

Certainly, Ayurveda was fascinated with the idea of enhancing mental capabilities, and so we come across a specified term "Medhya Rasayana" This terms refers to a specified group of drugs which work upon the mind, the "Medha" some of these herbs were also investigated for their effect mainly on memory and learning abilities. Brahmi (*Bacopa monieri*), Sankhapuspi (*Convolvulus pluricaulies*) etc. fall in this category. While these investigations testify the acclaimed effects to some extent, we may have to go a long way to understand their real role on memory and intelligence.

"Medhya Rasayana may turn an idiot to a normal person but may not change a normal person to a genius" Thus those drugs are capable of improving mental faculties in abnormal situation to some extent but may not have a real promise for normal persons. But the reality remains, memory and intellect are not just confined to brain. If we realize precisely every cell has its own intellect. And no one knows the practical effect of Medhya Rasayana drugs on this omnipresent cellular intellect as of now.

Anti-oxidant Effect

Oxygen creates another paradoxical situation for a living cell to face with. There has been a tremendous understanding today on the rampaging effects of oxygen free radicals if generated in excess to the demand. Body takes care of these excess free radicals, by producing certain kinds of enzymes to some extent. When these natural mechanisms become inadequate, the concentration of free radicals goes up in the tissues and lead to various diseases. Today, oxygen free radicals are implicated in a wide range of diseases starting from minor allergies to cancers.

Rasayana drugs are now discovered to help the physiology in over coming such oxidative injury. Present understanding goes that a Rasayana drug enhances the natural enzymatic defense mechanism of the body. While most of Rasayana drugs exhibit antioxidant activity, they are likely to have some kind of tissue specificity.

This thought remains a hypothesis as of now and the specific site of action for each of the Rasayana drugs is yet to be identified.

Anti-aging Effects

Administration of Rasayana drugs appears to be associated with prevention of aging also. There have been only few investigations in this direction and they are too inadequate to prove or disprove ancient thoughts. Available evidences faintly indicate that Rasayana drugs could influence the secretion of a hormone DHEA, the deficiency of which is implicated in the process of aging. Neurotransmitter substance such as Norepinephrine, Acetyl Choline or Dopamine (Dopamine is also named as DHEA-Dihydroxy phenyl alanine) are released in stress conditions. Repeated stress on every cell causes aging process.

Rasayana therapy is thus, associated with multidimensional effects on the physiology.

Classification of Rasayana⁴

1. According to Mode of Administration of Rasayana

- Kutipravesika (In door Regimen)
- Vatatapika (Out door Regimen)
- Droni Pravesika (Special Regimen)

2. According to Purpose of Administration

(a) Kamyas Rasayana (Promotor of normal health)

- Prana Kamyas (Promotor of life-vitality and longevity)
- Medha Kamyas (Promotor of intellect)
- Sri Kamyas (Promotor of Complexion and Lusture)

(b) Naimittika Rasayana (Promotors of specific vitality in specific diseases)

(c) Ajasrika Rasayana (Dietary Rasayana)

3. According to Mode of Action

- Samsodhana Rasayana
- Samsamana Rasayana

4. Acara Rasayana (Conduct Rasayana)

- Ahara Rasayana (Dietary Modalities)
- Acara Rasayana (Behavioural Modalities)
- Dravya Rasayana (Drug based measures)

5. According to Age

Classification of Rasayana according to age is given in Table 1

Table 1: Classification of Rasayana According to Age⁵

Age Group (Years)	Desired Effect	Rasayana Drugs
1-10	Balya	Vaca, Kasmari, Suvama
11-20	Vridhhi	Kasmari, Ashwagandha, Bala
21-30	Chavi	Lauha, Amalaki
31-40	Medha	Sankhapushpi, Brahmi, Jyotishmati
41-50	Twaka	Jyotishmati, Priyala, Somaraji, Bhringaraja
51-60	Drsti	Jyotishmati, Triphala, Lauha, Shatawari, Amalaki
61-70	Sukra	Atmagupta, Vajikarana Drugs
71-80	Vikrama	Drugs may not be effective
81-90	Buddhi	
91-100	Karmendriya	

(6) According to Deha Prakrti

Classification of Rasayana according to age is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Classification of Rasayana According to Deha Prakrti

Prakriti	Rasayana drugs
Vata	Bala, Nagabala and Ghrita
Pitta	Amalaki, Shatawari
Kapha	Bhallataka, Rasna, Guggulu and Pippali

(7) According to Ritu Saatmya

Classification of Rasayana according to Ritu Saatmya is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Classification of Rasayana According to Ritu Saatmya

Ritu / Kala	Rasayana drugs
Adana Kala (February - July)	Sita Virya and Laghu Guna Dravya (Amalaki)
Visarga Kala (August - January)	Ushna Virya and Guru Guna Dravya (Bhallataka)

Steps of Rasayana procedure and benefits

Purva Karma

Table 4: Purva Karma

Purva karma	Benefits
Snehana	Cleanses srotas
Swedana	Improves agni
Sam shodhana	Maintains doshic equilibrium
Sam sarjana	Makes way to improve nutritional quality of ahara rasa
Avoidance of negative attitude	Helps to attain confidence and stability of mind

Pradhana Karma**Table 5: Pradhana Karma**

Pradhana karma	Benefits
Suitable rasayana measure	Maintains unimpaired conditions of digestion, metabolism and micro circulation
1. Kuti Pravesika (Kamyā) 2. Vatatapika (Naimittika and ajasrika)	Improves quality of Ahara rasa Provides adequate nutrition to Dhatus
According to Vayu, Prakriti, Satmya etc.	Stops or delays the phenomenon of disease and decay

Phalashruti (Results) of the Rasayana therapy**Table 6: Phalashruti (Results) of the Rasayana therapy**

Phalashruti (Results)	Benefits
Rasayana Prabhava (benefits of Rasayana therapy mentioned in Ayurvedic classics)	Longevity
	Vigor
	Strength
	Immunity
	Vitality
	Mental competence

CONCLUSION

Science of Rejuvenation has for its specific objective i.e. prolongation of human life and the invigoration of memory and the vital organs of man. It deals with recipes which enable a man to retain his manhood or youthful vigor up to good old age and which generally serve to make the human systems invulnerable to disease and decay.

The Rejuvenation therapy has unimaginable and wonderful effects. It promotes life, maintains positive health, and preserves youth and cure morbid sleep, drowsiness, physical as well as mental fatigue, laziness and weakness. It maintains proper balance amongst Vata, Pitta and Kapha. It produces stability; cures stiffness of muscles, stimulation of muscles, stimulate digestion and metabolism.

Therefore persons desirous of attaining long life, vitality and happiness should practice Rejuvenation therapy with complete devotion according to the prescribed procedures.

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