

Benefits of Rasayana in Prevention of Premature Ageing**Dr. Mallikarjun Vishwanath Biradar**

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Abstract:

Being an eternal science, AYURVEDA – The science of life, deals with Physical, Psychological as well as Spiritual well being of an individual. It covers all the spheres of human life. The desire to live, one of the basic instinct has been common to all living creatures ever since the first unicellular organism evolved on this graceful planet, the Earth.

Man, the most developed and sophisticated living being on earth, is a step ahead in the sense, desires not only to live but to live a long, happy and disease free life as far as possible. But the continuous improvement in the life expectancy with technological advancement, urbanization, economical growth, increasing competition in every field of life etc., has lead to stressful society and that give rise the symptoms of Ageing before the time-Premature Ageing.

Rasayana – a unique and most important branch of Ayurveda, is the solution of undesired health problems resulting in short life span due to various physical & mental stresses. Rasayana includes multiangled approach by taking care of not only body but also mind and spirit by drug as well as non-drug measures including Achara Rasayana.

Rasayana drugs are a group of medicinal preparations having Balya, Medhya, Agnivardhaka, Ojovardhaka, and Vayasthapana etc. and had been also proven the pharmacological properties like Immunomodulator, Adaptogenic, Antistress, Antianxiety, Antidepressant, and Hepatoprotective etc. Different Rasayana drug formulations are having different pharmaco dynamics to counteract the Ageing Process.

Rasayana is meant as - रसा रसरक्तादय इयन्ते प्राप्तन्ते अनेनेति (Shabda kalpa druma). The pathway for essence of foodstuffs towards all body tissue elements so as to nourish and replenish them.

V.S. Apte, famous grammarian, in his Sanskrit English Dictionary, states that Rasayana is - an elixir of life (elixir vitae), any medicines supposed to prolong life and prevent old age, serving as an elixir vitae i.e., that which gratifies or regales.

Rasayana keeps away Jara; removes Daurbalya; cures diseases and overcomes even Mrtyu and person lives for thousand years. The individual not only gets his life span prolonged but also attains salvation.

KEY WORDS: Rasayana, Premature Ageing, Adaptogens.

Concept of Ageing:

Ageing process is continue to operate throughout life but their comparative importance tends to vary in different age groups and also in every individual by genetic factors, dietary habits, socio economic conditions, life style, occurrence of disease, etc In all countries, people are living longer. The graying of humanity is a revolution, a revolution that is

changing family structure; that is hitting developing countries harder than others; that is imposing more and more burden on women; and which extends well beyond demographics, with major economic, social, cultural, psychological and spiritual implications.

The theme of World Health Day 1999, in the International Year of Older Persons, 'Active Ageing makes the difference', recognizes that it is important for older people to go on playing a role in society. Active Ageing involves every dimension of one's

life: physical, mental, social and spiritual. Maintaining health and quality of life across the lifespan will do much towards building fulfilled lives, a harmonious, intergenerational community and a dynamic economy.

Our Acharya had also thought about this and given the way to think about the problem. In the Era, Stress is becoming main etiological factor behind each and every disease and also for diminished life span.

The Stress triggers a wide range of set of bodily changes called “Stress Response” of “General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)” producing excessive Free Radicals, which has a major effect on Ageing. The Free Radical Theory is one of the most important theories to understand the Ageing Process.

In Ayurveda, decade wise Ageing Process is described. One particular thing is being lost by each decay of lifespan. Ageing is described of two types- Kalaja & Akalaja. The kalaja Jara (Timely Ageing) is yapya, which may be delayed by using the appropriate measures, whereas the Akalaja Jara (Premature Ageing) is somewhat reversible by Rasayana therapy.

Pathophysiology of Ageing:

Physiology (ageing) and Pathology (disease) both are subtly interlinked and interspersed in Geriatric problems making it difficult to draw a dividing line between them. Probably both accelerate each other.

Ageing is ultimately cellular in nature. Cells require a precisely determined microenvironment- the milieu interieur- to operate optimally. Such an environment requires integrated functioning of all the body systems. The same is stressed in Ayurveda as the state of “Samyata” –i.e. equipoised state, of (1) “Doshas” the functional factors.

(2) “Dhatu” the structural components, and

(3) “Malas” the excretory products.

This “Samyata” is seen to be progressively disturbed with age.

Process of Ageing – Ayurvedic Perspective:

Transformation is the hallmark of time. Everything that is living undergoes various changes before it is worn out completely. This cycle of changes is known in Ayurveda as “Parinaama” which takes place under the constant influence of “Kala” of the time factor. In other words, Kala is responsible

for parinama. In this context, parinama being ageing, the sequential events of Balya, Tarunya Youvana, Proudha, Vardhikya, are all consequential eventualities of Kala.

Therefore, Ayurveda recognized Kala or Parinama as the potential causative factor of degenerative disease entities.

Jara, being a Swabhavabala pravritta vyadhi, occurs due to the above mentioned Vyadhihetu called Kala/Parinama.

कालस्य परिणामेन जरामृत्यु निमित्तजाः ।

रोगाः स्वाभाविकाः दृष्टा स्वभावोनिष्प्रतिक्रियः ॥

The effect of time is bound to happen and is “Nishpratikriya” i.e., unfavourable. However, if one adheres to certain modes of life, one can expect smooth sailing. The same is stressed by Chakrapani, while commenting on whether lifespan of an individual is predetermined. He compared the human body to a Ratha (Chariot). The full lifespan of the Ratha is subject to its proper maintenance or lubrication, as well as the conditions of the roads it has to traverse. Otherwise it is bound to deteriorate early. He concluded that the Ayu is not predetermined but is dependent on various endogenous and exogenous factors that interplay in the human body.

Etymology of Rasayana:

The word Rasayana is formed from two words viz. Rasa and Ayana.

The word 'Rasa' is formed from 'Ras Gatau' Dhatu and 'Ac' Pratyaya.

Acaryas have given various meanings for Rasa at different contexts.

Some of the common are -

1. Rasa is one that is experienced by Rasanendriya.
2. The one that nourishes Rasa, Rakta, etc. Dhatus (continuously) daily is called Rasa.
3. The essence of the digested foodstuff is known as Rasa.
4. The one that traverses throughout the body due to its liquidity is termed as Rasa.
5. Rasa is one that moves all over the body continuously.

The word Ayana has various meanings as given in Sabda Kalpa Druma and Vacaspatyam. They are pathway, movement, road, place, site, abode, a way of entrance, an entrance etc.

The classics have given the synonym Rasayani for Srotas which means channels which carry nutrients for vivid body tissues.

Definition of Rasayana:

यज्जराव्याधिविध्वंसि वयःस्तम्भकरं तथा ।

चक्षुष्यं ब्रुहणं वृष्यं भेषजं तद्रसायनम् ॥

(Bha.Pra 3.73/1)

Rasayana Tantra is one which deals with delaying of ageing process, increasing of intellect and strength, prolongation of life and curing of disorders.

Dalhana says that Vayahsthapana means prolonging the life upto hundred years, Ayuskara means increasing the life span above hundred years. According to others, Vayahsthapana means maintaining youth and delaying ageing. Cakrapani also has the same opinion.

The same was followed in his commentary on Su. Ci. 27/1-2 as the one which nourishes, Rasa, Rakta etc. Dhatus or the one which stabilises youthfulness and prolongs life with activities through its Rasa, Virya etc. is called Rasayana.

Acarya Caraka simply defined Rasayana as the means by which an individual gets the excellence of Rasa, etc. Dhatus. Along with physical excellence, psychic excellence like sharp memory etc. are also endowed by this, says Cakrapani.

Classification of Rasayana:

(A) Two types have been mentioned in

Ca. Ci. 1/1/16.

- (i) Kutipravesika
- (ii) Vatatapika

This classification is based on the mode of administration. Kutipravesika is one in which Rasayana is given with person staying inside a closed Kuti whereas Vatatapika is that in which Rasayana is administered with patient exposed to Vata and Atapa. In other words, Kutipravesika is an indoor administration while Vatatapika is an outdoor administration of Rasayana.

Dronipravesika is similar to Kutipravesika with slight modification wherein the individual is made to stay in a Droni (made out of Palasa) for six months consuming milk diet (Ca. Ci. 1/4/7).

(B) Two types as mentioned by Dalhana based on their mode of action.

(1)Samsodhana - 'Dosasya Samsodhanadi Samsodhanam'

(2)Samsamana - 'Samsamanam Nagabaladi Prayogadikam'

Samsodhana and Samsamana, both are curative in nature. Samsodhana type of Rasayana expels the aggravated Dosas whereas Samsamana type pacifies the accumulated ones.

(C) Three types as per Dalhana's opinion.

- (1) Kamya
- (2) Naimittika
- (3) Ajasrika

This classification is probably based on the utility of Rasayana.

Kamya Rasayana is subdivided into Pranakamiya, Srikamiya and Medhakamiya Rasayanas. i.e., to increase the life span, to prolong the life span and to increase the cognitive abilities of mind respectively.

"Naimittikam Vyadhinimittam" i.e., Naimittika type of Rasayana is nothing but Rasayana specific to a disease.

"Ajasrikam Ksiraghrtabhyasadikam" i.e., Ajasrika Rasayana deals with daily intake of milk, ghee, etc. Rasayana so as to promote the body immunity.

(D) Susruta has classified into four types

- (1) Sarvopaghata Samaniya
- (2) Medhayuskamiya
- (3) Svabhavavyadhi Pratisedhaniya
- (4) Nivrta Santapiya

In this, Sarvopaghata Samaniya deals with Rasayana to counteract the disease process. Medhayuskamiya is one by which an individual can increase his intellect and prolong his life. Svabhavavyadhi Pratisedhaniya is one which delays the onset of Svabhavika Vyadhis like Ksut, Jara, Pipasa, Mrtyu, etc. and Nivrta Santapiya Rasayana rebuilds the physical and mental faculties following their disturbance due to disease process.

It can be further classified into five types based on their benefits (Caraka Sutrasthana, 4th chapter).

- (1) Dirghayuskara - Jivaniya and Brmhaniya
- (2) Tarunyakara - Vayahsthapana
- (3) Balakara - Balya
- (4) Medhakara - Medhya
- (5) Rogahara - Roganut (specific to disease)

One more Rasayana variety has been mentioned in Ca. Ci. 1/4/36 i.e., Achara Rasayana or Nitya Rasayana where in an individual follows Sadvrta and Swasthavrta strictly and gets the beneficial effects.

Persons who are truthful and free from anger, alcohol and sexual indulgence; who do not indulge in violence and over exercise; who are peaceful and pleasing in speech, who practice Japa, Tapa, cleanliness, charity; who are stable and steady; who regularly offer prayers to Gods, cows, brahmanas, teachers, preceptors and aged people; who are compassionate and merciful; who go to sleep and awake at regular time; who habitually take ghee and milk; who are experts in the knowledge of rationality; who are free from ego; whose conduct is good; who are not narrow minded; who love spiritual knowledge; who have excellent sense organs, respect for elders; who believe in the existence of Gods; who have self control and who regularly study Dharmasastras will get best out of rejuvenation therapy. If persons endowed with these qualities practise rejuvenation therapy, they get all the rejuvenation effects described above.

Benefits of Rasayana:

दीर्घमायुः स्मृतिं मेधामारोग्यं तरुणं वयः ।
प्रभावर्णस्वरौदार्यं देहेन्द्रियबलं परम् ॥
वाक्सिद्धिं प्रणतिं कान्तिं लभते ना रसायनात् ।

लाभोपायो हि शस्तानां रसादीनां रसायनम् ॥ (ca. ci 1/7,8)

An ideal Rasayana prolongs life, improves memory and intellect, promotes health, provides immunity against diseases thereby helps an individual to lead an energetic life. It improves lustre and complexion of the body, tones the voice and speech, increases the acuity of all the sensory and motor organs, vitality and vigour.

तथाऽभवन्महर्षीणां रसायनविधिः पुरा ।
न जरां न च दौर्बल्यं नातुर्यं निधनं न च ॥
जगुर्वर्षसहस्राणि रसायनपराः पुरा ।
न केवलं दीर्घमिहायुरश्रुते रसायनं यो विधिवन्निषेवते ।
गतिं स देवर्षिनिषेवितानां शुभां प्रपद्यते ब्रह्म तथेति चाक्षयम् ॥

(ca. ci 1/77,80)

Rasayana keeps away Jara; removes Daurbalya; cures diseases and overcomes even Mrtyu and person lives for thousand years. The individual not only gets his life span prolonged but also attains salvation.

In Astanga Samgraha and later classics, instead of Pranati, Vrsata was mentioned i.e., Rasayana can also impart Vrsya properties (A.S. U. 49/3-4).

By Rasayana, the Syama (dark) complexion can be turned into Gaura (fair) complexion and its withdrawal causes the other way. Rasayana works off old age, cures diseases, prolongs life span, gives strength to Caksuradi Indriyas, improves immunity against diseases and acts also as Vrsya. With the help of Rasayana, Japa, Tapa and Yoga, one can overcome even death. Rasayana, Tapa etc. will cure, with their Prabhava etc., the diseases which are considered incurable.

The diseases which had shown even the imminent signs of death can be superseded by the administration of Rasayana or by performing Japa, Tapa etc. By undergoing Rasayana, the ailments arising as a result of Viruddhasana can be overcome.

Dalhana commenting on Su. Ci. 27/1-2, says that
Vardhaka means which increases
Sthapaka means which stabilises and
Apraptaprapaka means which gives additional endowments.

So, here Vardhaka is nothing but Ayurvedhaka i.e., prolongation of life span. Sthapaka stabilises the youth of an individual by improving healthy status and increasing body immunity against ailments. Apraptaprapaka means fulfilling the nourishment needed thereby increasing body tissue elements resulting in increased immunity and person will be endowed with additional features. All these three here serve the purpose of Swasthyaraksana. Most of the Rasayana Dravyas have either Madhura Rasa or Madhura Vipaka (Ca. Su. 26/43-1). Such drugs when used give benefits to the body in the form of -

- Increasing Rasa Rudhira, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja, Ojas and Sukra, Increasing longevity, Soothes six sense organs, Promotes strength and complexion, Improves the integument, Promotes healthy hairs, Improves voice, Increase strength, Soothes, Invigorates, Nourishes, Promotes body mass, Gives stability to the body.

From the foregoing lines, it is observed that majority of Rasayana Dravyas has prophylactic property improving the immunity of the body and in turn lengthening the life span. One can get ample

references regarding curative effects of Rasayana in the classics along with their health promoting effects.

Rasayana Vis-A-Vis Adaptogens

Majority of Rasayana drugs were proved to have immunomodulatory property, anabolic effect and antioxidant properties. Recent advancement in the medical science is pointing toward another activity of such drugs and these are called adaptogenic property.

Adaptogens:

The concept of 'Adaptogen' was coined in 1947 by a Russian Scientist, Lazarev. He defined them as "substances meant to put the organism into a state of non specific heightened resistance in order to resist stresses and adapt to extraordinary challenges". In general, adaptogens are a group of medically effective substances that normalise body functions, strengthen systems and functions compromised by stress and have a protective effect against a wide variety of environmental and emotional stresses.

General Adaptive Syndrome (GAS), formulated by Selye is a consistent, nonspecific response of the organism to stressful influences of totally diverse types, the adaptive reaction enables the body to heighten its power or resistance towards stresses, and to adapt to external conditions.

Though difficult to differentiate adaptogenic effect from other remedies of related action, there are number of criteria which allow a formal arrangement of these other drugs in immunostimulants, nootropics, anabolics, tonics and geriatric acids. Rasayana is certainly having any one or more of these activities.

Immune stimulants are substances which bring about a heightened resistance through the stimulation of non specific defensive processes which are largely independent of antigens.

Nootropics (cognition enhances) are effective psychopharmacological agents which are said to improve the higher integrative brain functions, such as memory, learning, understanding, thinking and the capacity for concentration. No specific mechanisms are known. It is assumed that nootropics stimulate existing neural synapses to optimum performance (adaptive capacity) and also for damaging influences, such as disturbances of the energy and neurotransmitter metabolism or ischaemia (protective capacity).

Anabolics are substances which activate the anabolic metabolism. They promote the synthesis of nucleic acids and protein metabolism, thereby in general, growth. Tonics and geriatric remedies fall into the category of wellness enhances. Though a precise conceptual definition cannot be given for both, tonics are defined in a very generalised way as substances which mitigate conditions of weakness or lack of tone within the entire organism, or in particular organs. Being adaptogenic, like all the others, generally, adaptogens raise ones capacity, therefore may also be included by the group of tonics.

Geriatric remedies are substances serving as a preventive treatment of old age diseases. Stiffness and age conditioned rigidity are possibly the outer manifestations of diminished or lacking ability to adapt.

Brekhman, in 1958, summarised the concept adaptogen as follows:

- It must show a nonspecific effect (raising the power of resistance to toxins of a physical, chemical or biological nature).
- It is to normalise, independent of the type of pathological condition.
- It must be harmless and disturb the body functions as little as possible.

Accordingly, adaptogens are to strengthen the nonspecific powers of resistance to noninfectious stresses, raise the general performance capacity during stress situations and thereby prevent diseases that could develop due to overstressing the organism. It is seen as characteristic of adaptogens that their anti stress effect towards stresses of a noninfectious variety, always stands in the foreground. Although in so called adaptogens, immune stimulating, nootropic or metabolic effects have also been proved.

By going through the aforesaid pages, it is certain that adaptogens show the similar qualities of Rasayana i.e., Dhatuvrddhikara, Medhya, Pustikara, Balada, Dehendriya Drdhikarana, Brmhaniya, Jivaniya, etc. and thus help improve body's defense system.

Some Of The Rasayanans:

Aindra Rasayana, Pippali Rasayana, Bhallataka Rasayana (in Kustha, Arsas), Ayo Rasayana (in Mahakustha), Tuvarka Rasayana (in Madhumeha), Somaraji Kalpa (in Kustha - A. S.U.

39/), Lasuna Kalpa (in Vatavyadhi), Guggulu Kalpa, Silajatu Kalpa, Vrddhadaru Kalpa, Sarpiguda (in Ksataksina), Yogaraja (in Pandu), etc.

Conclusion:

Impairment of Rasa (nourishment) results in disease. Rasa should be present adequate quantity and should be able to penetrate through the various cells of the body to provide nourishment. Dhatus undergo a continuous process depletion due to interaction with Agnis. If this is allowed to continue uninterrupted, ageing comes in early. In youth, Agni helps speed up synthesis of ingredients for growth of cells whereas in old age the destructive activity is enhanced rendering the human susceptible to several types of diseases ultimately leading to death. If this process is somehow arrested, by supplying Rasa in adequate quantity with the power to penetrate, ageing can be delayed.

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