

Rasayana In Pre-mature Aging; A Need of the Era

Vishnu V. Nath^{1*}, Anulakshmi. R²

Asst. Professor¹, P.G. Scholar², Department of Kayachikitsa¹, Department of Drayaguna²
A. L. N. Rao Memorial Ayurvedic Medical College, Koppa, Karnataka, India-577126.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Vishnu V. Nath

E-mail: vishnuvijayanath@gmail.com

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Abstract:

The modern age is the age of pollution externally and internally (both body and mind). Pollution of air, water, sound, food and everything around. Busy lifestyle, tight work schedules, emotional disturbances, instability of human relations. - everything adds up to speed of premature aging.

As Sir James Sterling Ross commented: "You do not heal old age. You protect it; you promote it; you extend it". Old age being regarded as a normal phase of human life. It is an inevitable biological phenomenon. But aging prematurely as we see today, on the contrary is something that demands significant medical attention. So, the accelerated speed of aging needs to be retarded and old age should be delayed as much as possible. Ayurveda here offers a time-tested anti-aging principle, the Rasayana therapy, which is a priceless gift for the humanity and has become the need of the era.

Rasayana is not just a medicine. Instead, a broad concept which includes a set of practices, food or any Dravyas that possesses the power and that fits the definition of Rasayana.

The concept of Rasayana has been explained in Bruhatrayis and Laghutrayis as separate chapters to explain its importance in our daily life. Acharya Chakrapani, Delhana, Arunadutta have also forwarded different concepts and effects of Rasayana.

Even though Rasayana has multiple dimensions of effectiveness, this paper focuses on its preventive aspects along with concept of Rasayanathantra, concept of Ayu, Sarva Dhathu Sara Oja, concept of Dhathu Vishishta Poshana, classification and contraindications of Rasayana and Rasayana in modern era with special reference to prevention of premature ageing.

Key Words: Rasayana, Ayu, Dhathu, Ojas, Rejuvenation, Premature aging.

Introduction:

The word *Rasayana* is a combination of two elements, *Rasa* and its *Ayana* (path). The prime *Rasa Dhathu* is formed from *Ahara Rasa*. Through the pathways (*Srotas*) all around the body, it gets circulated providing essential nourishments to all the *Dhatus* (*Dhathu Poshana*). So, under the condition that there are no obstructions in the path of its movement, the *Rasa* which is endowed with higher qualities, will naturally nourish all the components of the body properly.

By this method of *Rasakriya*, the *rasa* is carried through all the *Dhatus*, as the source of biochemical transformation. This then makes the prime nutrition into advanced forms of *Dhathu* enabling the growth and repair of the body (*Poshana* to *Poshya*).

The *Rasayana* karma is performed after the purification of all the channels of circulation (*shodana*) of thus said prime nutrition. This prime nutrition then undergoes different stages of transformation, when it passes through different levels of metabolism, as per the requirement of *Dhathu*. (specific components of the body).

Not only this, in addition to circulation, and clearance of thus said micro-channels, the quality of nutritive compounds is also vital. So *Rasayana* provides revitalisation to the weak and under nourished components of the body. This is done by taking them to their excellence in performance (what we call the *dhathu Saratha*).

Thus, *Rasayana* provides ultimate enhanced performance of the complete body as a whole unit. By which the senses, mind and intellect will be strengthened and boosted to its best.

Background:

Rasayana is one of the eight branches of *Ayurveda*.⁽¹⁾ so much importance is given to this particular branch that the chapters of *Rasayana* find foremost place in *Charaka Samhita Chikitsa sthana*.⁽²⁾ while *Charaka Samhita* describes *Rasayana* in the first pada of *Chikitsa sthana* in *Sushruta Samhita* it is pushed back to chapters 27-30 of *Chikitsa sthana*.⁽³⁾ in *Ashtanga Hridaya* *Rasayana* does not find a special place in *Chikitsa sthana* and is described only briefly that in the 39th chapter of *Uttar tantra*.⁽⁴⁾ this shows the decline of importance being provided to *Rasayana Tantra* with the passage of time.

Rather than the miss concept of the common folks, that *Rasayana* reduces age, it is better to say that it reduces aging. Prolonging *Ayu* (life span) is another question. *Ayu Pareeksha*- aims at finding out the pre fixed *Ayu* or lifespan. Here *Ayu* is not been altered, rather its quality been increased and upgraded as promised i.e.; from *Dhukhayu* to *Sukhayu* or *Ahitayu* to *Hitayu*.

This would be done by enriching the lifespan with highest quality of health, which includes unclouded intellect, optimum physical strength and enhanced immunity of person, whom to which it is administered. And all of this makes such a person perfect “being himself.”

Stating clear, the concepts in Ayurveda are never focused on making an individual not what actually he totally is.ie; fairer 10 times, brilliant and taller multiple times etc. but our concepts focus on re-establishing normalcy at its excellence.

Effect of emotions on premature aging:

Emotions also play significant role in the body. As now we know the “Takot subo cardio- myopathy or Broken heart syndrome” in which the heart actively weakens in response to intense stress or grief. Such as after a romantic breakup or death of a loved one.

As Ayurveda have the explanation of *Hrudayam Chethana stana* or *Hrudayam Moolam* for *Manovaha srothas* and *Kama Shoka Bhayath Vayu*; *Krodhath Pittam* etc, and we know the connection between *Manasa* and *Sharirika Dosha* and the significance of mind. The mind, that can influence any *Srotas* without even touching and existing in a higher level demands significant attention while dealing with premature aging.

But here modern science stays confused with such disorders.

As well, on the contrary, laughter is known to have benefits like, Lowering blood pressure, reduction of risk of stroke, heart attack, reducing stress hormone level, improving cardiac health, boosting T cells, triggering the release of endorphins and producing a general sense of wellbeing.

With these facts, *Rasayana* is not just a medicine, but do includes the practises mentioned in psychotherapy balancing the *satva* element (mind). This makes such a person not only competent enough to handle day today stress of modern life but also helps to remove harmful effects of stress from his body preventing premature aging.

While taking into consideration of *Charakas* opinion on *Rasayana*, he defines it in broder aspect including everything that possess the power of *Rasayana*.

“*Deergham ayu smriti medha arogyam tharunam vayaha Brabha varna swarodharya dehendriya balam param Vaak*

sidhi pranatjim kanthim labadhena rasayanam”
“*Labhopayo hi shasthanam rasadhinam rasayanam*”

Rasayana Tantra; The 7th Branch:

“*Rasayana tantram namah vayah sthapanam ayu medha balakara rogopaharana samardham cha||*”

Explained as that which stabilises the aging or to be understood as slowing down or allowing the right course of aging process. Promoting the life span, intellect and strength as well as eliminating diseases.

In this present era how *Susruta* explains *Rasayana* tantra becomes more relevant, where he explains it as a branch of medicine that which prevents all types of ill effects of time (*kala*) improper food, drinks, improper behaviour (*Ahita Ahara vihara*). in addition to this, he advises *Rasayana* not just for old people but,

“*Purve madhye vayasi va manushyaya rasayanam*”

That it is for young and middle ages prior to it.

We do have references of people lived more than 100 years in olden classics.

- *Kritha yuga* – 400 years
- *Thretha yuga* – 300 years
- *Dwapara yuga* – 200 years

“*Varsha shatham khalu ayushaha paramanam asmin kala*”

That is in *Kaliyuga* even the maximum age limit is explained as 100 years. Reduction of life span is common to all and this makes *Rasayana tantra* a requirement of the era.

Concept of Ayu

“*Srareera indriya satwa athma samyogo dhari jeevitham Nithyagacha anubhandhacha paryayer ayuruchyathe*”

The term *Ayu* stands for the combination of the body, sense organs mind and soul. It is synonymous to

- *Dhari* – the one which prevents the body from decay
- *Jeevitha*- which keeps alive
- *Nithya*- which serves as permanent substratum of body
- *Anubanda*- which trans migrate from one body to another or a continuation.

Rasayana when defined as *Derkham Ayu* is to be understood with the help of this explanation.i. e; *Rasayana* delays the disintegration and decay of body (*Dhari*). It keeps entities of body fresh and alive doing its optimum function (*Jeevita*). This provides the paramount substratum to the body (*Nithya*) ultimately through the practice of methods like *Achara Rasayana*, *Sadvritta*, it provides the spiritual health and even ease the trans migration of soul and at the end by providing moksha. (*Anubanda*)

Concept of dhathu poshana and significance of rasayana in prevention of pre-mature aging.

As per 3 *Nyayas*, *Ksheera Dhadhi*, *Khale Kapotha* and *Kethara kulya*, body gets nourished. The *Poshya* and *Poshaka dhathu* exists in a harmony in body. That nourishes and that get nourished. The stable (*Poshya*) entities are to be maintained as such. The strength excellence and maximum endurance of all these *Dhatus* are prefixed. These pre fixing are based on the imprint of genetical makeup which had acquired from mother- father or their ancestors which are passed down through the *Parampara*.

As well as,

“*Shukra Shonitha Samyoge Yo bhavath dosha uthkate tatra prakruthi jayathe*”

i.e., the *Dosha* predominance at the time of fertilization is also a cause of such said pre fixing. All these above said factors makes every individual different and specific.

Sukra dhathu is considered as the vehicle of *Ojas*, and the explanation of *ojas* as mala or *Upadhathu* of *Sukra* is available in text books. So *Ojas* have a high relation to *Sukra dhathu*.

Sarva dhathu sara Oja

Saratha is an output of optimum excellent performance of dhathu and its output is nothing other than *Ojas*.

So, *Ojas* is the representation of *Saptha dhathu*

of an individual in its optimum form. it exactly represent the individualistic expression of dhathu.

As per *Ayurveda* - by the heat of coitus *Sukra* comes out of whole body as water comes out of a mud pot from all around it. This *Sukra* is then collectively delivered as the essence representing the genetic imprint of an individual.

Sukra dhathu's function here is to collect the essence of *Sapta dhathu*-that is *Ojas* and collectively deliver this *Sapta dhathu Sara* to represent the off springs qualities of physical as well as mental makeup.

If these representations are of low quality, the progeny may not receive the best of which a parent possesses.

So, now in the light of all these facts mentioned, we know why *Rasayana* is practiced before *Vajeekarana*. *Rasayana* here is the one that takes dhathus to its excellence and produce *Ojas* as its output and representation. By making this happen, *Rasayana* also keeps the *Tridosha* in balance creating the ultimate harmony of *Doshas*. So, when a progeny is born out of such parents to whom which *Rasayana* is done, it results in the state of *Swastha* of the young one from the womb itself.

As long as *Poshana* is proper, sufficiently and properly circulated and the dhathus can absorb them as per their requirement; the stable entities (*Poshya*) remain unaffected.

But when it is affected, these stable entities are altered causing decay and degeneration. Main cause of this is *Agnimandhya* (poor metabolism) in different levels. This in turn is contributed by our modern era lifestyle and environment. Which later leads to occlusion of the channels of circulation due to partially metabolised product accumulation (*Aama*).

All these in later stage causes malnutrition which even persist with good nutritious food, as an output of mal-absorption. This vicious cycle here is the root cause of pre-mature aging which we can see nowadays in our day-to-day life.

Rasayana with its *Poorva karma* of *Shodhana*, removes this occlusion and provides nourishment by upgrading *Dhathuagni*. Here it balances the metabolism even within the tissue level of nutrition and thus stabilises the dhathu by balancing the *Dosha* within.

Effect of rasayana in dhathu vishishta poshana:

Khale Kapota Nyaya, states that a *dhathu* takes whatever required for their specific nourishment from the main crude flow of nutrition. Modern science also provides a similar concept. Like calcium for bone, iron for RBC etc.

Within the concept of *Naimittika Rasayana*, we can see the usage of specific *Rasayana Prayogas*. These have more targeted actions on a specific condition or on a particular *Dhathu* where the disease is located.

These kind of focused and quick action of the thus said *Naimittikas* are due to the dhathu *Vishishta Poshana* they carry. Taking in a *Dosha* level it carries the *Dosha Visheshatha* even in a *Vyavachedaka* level.

Like *Kera Kesara Rasayana* acting on *Apana Vayu* that controls the *Sukra- Arthava- Shakruth-Moothra- Garbha Nishkramana kriya* or *Ajamamsa Rasayana* acting in *Mamsa Medho Dhathu* or *Narasimha Rasayana* which has specific action on *Asthi Dhathu* promoting hair growth.

i.e.; at first after the generalised action of *Jataragni*; *Bhoorthagni* acts splitting *Poshana* into *Pancha Boutika Amsha*.

If this provided nourishment is more related to a specific *Dhathu*, it provides more targeted nourishment to the same. For example; '*Parthiva Dravya*' can provide more specific nourishment to the dhathu that is more *Parthiva* in nature like *Asthi*.

This principle is adopted in *Naimittika Rasayana* to provide *Vyadhi Prathyanikatha*. Such specific *Rasayana* balances the deficit of a particular nutrition in a specific dhathu. Thus, such a *Dhathu* acquiring *Saratha*, can fight best against its own *dhathu Gatha Vyadis*. This output of *Rasayana*, which keeps body protected from the diseases, in turn keeps away pre-mature aging.

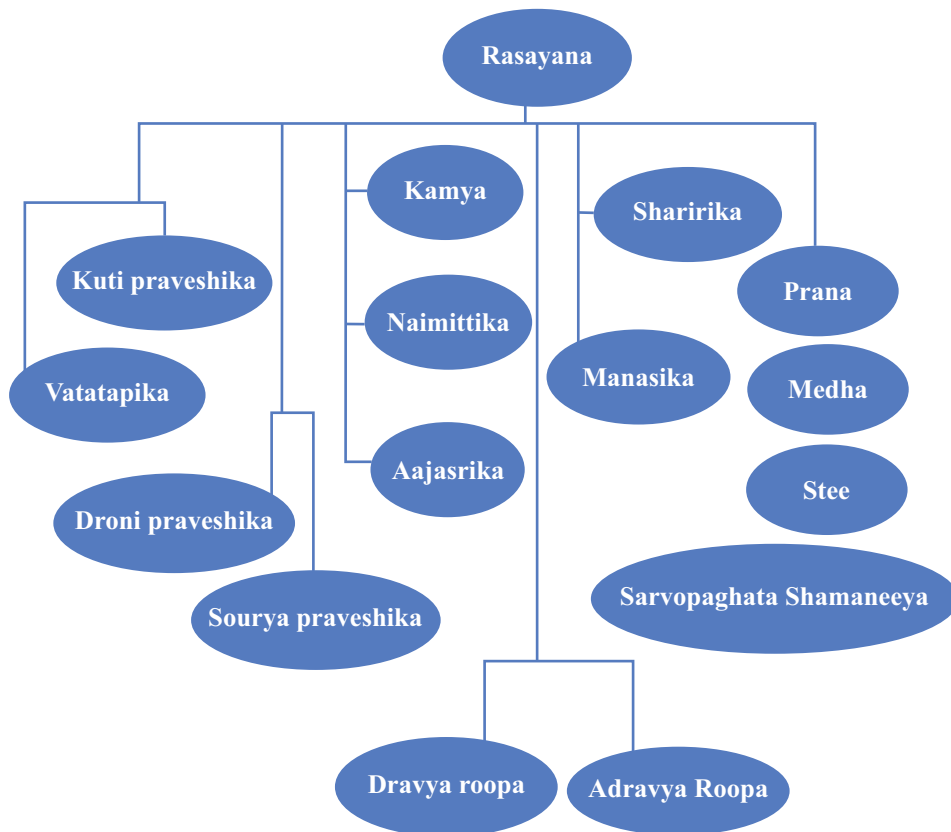
Table 1: Rasayana medicines according to age groups according to Sarangadhara

Age In Years	Attributes Lost	Desirable Rasayana
0-10 yrs	Balyavastha (childhood)	Swarna (gold)
11-20 yrs	Vruddi (growth)	Bala (<i>Sida cordifolia</i> Linn)
21-30 yrs	Chavi (lusture)	Amalaki (<i>Embilica officinalis</i> Gaertn)
31-40 yrs	Medha (intellect)	Shankapuspi (<i>Convolvulus pluricaulis</i> Choisy)
41-50 yrs	Twak (complexion)	Jyotismati (<i>Celastrus paniculatus</i>)
51-60 yrs	Drushti (vision)	Jyotismati (<i>Celastrus paniculatus</i>)
61-70 yrs	Shukra (reproductive power)	Ashvagandha (<i>Withania somnifera</i> L)
71- 80 yrs	Vikram (courage)	Bala (<i>Sida cordifolia</i> Linn)
81-90 yrs	Buddhi (intelligence)	Brahmi (<i>Herpestris moniera</i> HBK)
91-100 yrs	Karma indriya (motor organs)	Bala (<i>Sida cordifolia</i> Linn)
101-110 yrs	Chetas/manas (mind)	Rasayana may not be effective
111-120 yrs	Jivan (ceasation of life)	Rasayana may not be effective

Table 2: Rasayana according to Prakruti

Prakruti	Dravya
Vata	Bala (<i>Sida cordifolia</i> Linn)
Pitta	Amalaki (<i>Embilica officinalis</i> Gaertn)
Kapha	Ballathaka (<i>Semicarpus anacardium</i>)

Figure 1: Classification of Rasayana



Contraindications of Rasayana:

According to *Acharya Susruta*, *Rasayana* is contra indicated to seven types of people

1. *Anathmavan* (those who are not self-controlled)
2. *Alasi* (Lasy)
3. *Daridri* (financially weak)
4. *Pramadi* (the indigent unwise not listening)
5. *Vyasani* (addicted to vices addicts)
6. *Papakrut* (the sinful)
7. *Bheshajapmani* (those who do not trust on medicine)

The seven causes that hinders the effect of Rasayana:

1. *Ignorance*
2. *Inactivity*
3. *Unsteadymind*
4. *Poverty*
5. *Dependence*
6. *Intemperance and impiety*
7. *Inability to secure the genuine medicine*

Rasayana in the present days:

Ayurvedic classics gives detailed descriptions on *Rasayana*. Many researches have been done on well-known *Rasayana* drugs.

Root extracts of *Ashwagandha* has shown good effect in relieving pain disability caused in patients of osteoarthritis of knee⁽⁵⁾. also extracts of leaves of *Amalaki* (*Embllica officinalis*) is found to exert rapid protective effect against lipid peroxidation by scavenging of free radicals and reducing the risk of diabetic complications.⁽⁶⁾ *Triphala* has exhibited anti-inflammatory effects in animal model.⁽⁷⁾ *Triphala* was found to alleviate the nephrotoxic effects of bromobenzene by increasing the activity of antioxidant enzymes and reducing the level of liquid peroxidation and kidney functional markers.⁽⁸⁾ another famous *Rasayana* medicine *Bilwa* has also shown strong anti-tumour and antioxidant activities.⁽⁹⁾ *Bilwa* has shown to possess gastro-duodenal protective and anti-ulcerogenic properties through its antioxidant mechanism.⁽¹⁰⁾

Vayalil PK et al mentioned that emerging data suggest that the possible mechanisms may be by immune- stimulation, quenching free radicals, enhancing cellular detoxification mechanism; repair damaged non-proliferating cells, inducing cell proliferation and self- renewal of damaged proliferating tissues, and replenishing them by eliminating damaged or mutated cells with fresh cells.⁽¹¹⁾

All these researches prove the effect of *Rasayana dravya* in improving the optimum function of *dhatu* thereby enhancing the ojas and by which it enhances the *vyadikshamathwa* of an individual to whom it is administered.

Conclusion:

Rasayana being one among the ashtanga *Chikitsa* is used in variably in all other branches. What mistakes are being done in modern era ayurvedic clinical practise is that the *Rasayanas* are advised without *Agnideepana*, *Ama Pachana* and *Stroto Vishodhana* or not allowing the *Rasayana Chikitsa* followed by properly done *Shamana* or *Shodhana* followed by *Shishta Dosha Nivaranartha Shamana*. If *Rasayana Chikitsa* follow the thus said course of treatments, it ensures the complete effect of “*na thesam punaruthbhava*” Every branch of *Ayurveda* should thus do more focused researches and studies as well as encourage the use of the *Rasayana* in an ethical way as mentioned in classics, while dealing with diseases coming under their own specialization.

As well the generalized practise of *Rasayana* as a preventive medicine also should be advised as a part of *Swasthavritta*, since *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam* is another half of our task.

Future Scope:

Rasayana is the medicine of future. It prevents the disease or reduces its strength of blow even before it is manifested. It can ultimately keep pre-mature aging in control. This branch of *Ayurveda* has to be researched more in its preventive aspect. This is so, because a healthy community is an output not just of curative medicines, instead the one which is resistant to social, physical, mental and spiritual ailments; which is nothing but the output of *Rasayana*.

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