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THE ROLE OF RASAYANA THERAPY IN THE PREVENTION OF DISEASES

Bhamode D.P

Assistant Professor, Department of Rognidan and Vikruti vigyan, Shri R. T. Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Akola,
Maharashtra, India

ABSTRACT:

Introduction: *Ayurveda* is also frequently referred as '*Ashtanga Ayurveda*' and *Rasayana chikitsa* are the part of it. *Rasayana tantra* is a specialized branch of *Ayurveda* that primarily centers on preserving and enhancing health by revitalizing metabolism and boosting immunity. It is essentially a therapeutic approach designed to address both aging (*jara*) and diseases (*Vyadhi*), categorized into two types: *swasthasya urjaskara* and *arthasya roganut*. They are also the best at promoting the growth and correct sustenance of all seven tissues (*Dhatu*s). It denotes the significance of this particular branch of *Ashtanga Ayurveda* in treatment. *Ayurveda*'s goals are to treat the *Aatura* (diseased person) and maintain *Swasthya* (health). *Rasayana*'s practical application at both levels aids in achieving the goal. *Rasayana* aims to ensure not only a longer and healthier life but also mental well-being and resistance against various geriatric conditions and lifestyle-related disorders. **Aims And Objectives:** To explore the role of *Rasayana* therapy in prevention of disease. **Materials and Method:** *Brihat - trayee* with their commentaries, supportive text of contemporary science, references from internet and journal were appraisal for the study. **Discussion:** The proposed mechanisms of action, such as antioxidant, immunomodulators, adaptogenic, anabolic, nutritive, and neuroprotective effects, provide a bridge between traditional wisdom and modern scientific understanding. These mechanisms highlight the adaptability of *Rasayana* therapy to address various aspects of human health, making it a versatile and valuable component of Ayurvedic medicine. **Conclusion:** *Rasayana chikitsa* is described in *Ayurveda* as a way to prevent ageing and strengthen immunity (*Vyadhishamaatva bala*). *Rasayana Chikitsa* is also utilised for the disease's prophylactic, curative, and promotional elements.

KEYWORDS: Rasayana, Dhatu, prevention, health, antioxidants.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

DR. DHANSHREE PUNDLIKRAO BHAMODE

BAMS, MD (Kayachikitsa)

Assistant Professor, Department of Rognidan and Vikruti vigyan,
Shri R. T. Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Akola, Maharashtra, India

Contact No. 9890978563 Email- dmgawai94@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION:

Out of all eight branches, *Jara* or *Rasayana*, is the one that is most frequently utilized to promote strength, including *Ojabala* and immunity. *Rasayana Chikitsa* is a special branch of *Ayurveda* that promotes superior *Dhatu* characteristics and nutritional health, all of which contribute to a number of secondary benefits of *Rasayana*, including longer life spans. The word *Rasayana* (*Rasa*+*Ayana*) refers to nutrition and its transportation in the body. *Rasa* means nutrition and *Ayana* means microcellular channels for transportation, and hence *Rasayana* essentially means nutrition at the microcellular level. Also, the word *Rasa* stands for all the *Dhatu*s, and *Ayana* (*Vardhan*) means nutrition or nourishment. *Sharangadhara* has advised that in each group of age, every person should take specific *Rasayana* for keeping healthy and fit. It should be kept in mind that *Rasayana* has a more preventive aspect than a curative one. Hence it is done after the treatment of disease to prevent recurrence of that disease or to nourish the tissues that have been damaged by the disease. It can also be done in absence of a disease to prevent the occurrence of diseases. *Rasayanas* come in various types, including *Dravyabhuta*, *Adravyabhuta*, *kutipravesika*, *Vatatapika*, *Shodhana Rasayana*, *Shamana Rasayana*, *Kamyas Rasayana*, *Naimittika Rasayana*, and *Ajasrika Rasayana*. The significance of a purification process, *Shodhana*, is underlined before *Rasayana* therapy,^[1] as it is akin to cleaning a soiled cloth before dyeing it. *Rasayanas* serve diverse purposes, including disease treatment, prevention and the promotion of overall health. *Rasayanas* encompass a range of methods aimed at enhancing the quality of bodily tissues, known as *prashasta dhatu*s.^[2] These methods are especially beneficial for the primary tissues, or *rasadi dhatu*s and are geared towards promoting longevity (*ayu*),

strength (*bala*), intelligence (*medha*), disease recovery, and the prevention of premature aging (*vayahasthapana*). From *Rasayana* (promotive treatment), one attains excellent memory, freedom from disorders, youthful age, radiating lustre, pleasing colour, commanding voice, optimum strength of physique and sense organs, influencing speech, respectability, reverential attitude and lovelines.^[3] *Rasayana* (promotive treatment) means the way for attaining excellent *Rasa* (*Dhatu*s). That process which facilitates optimum movement acquisition, assimilation and circulation of the essence of food or medicine to gain the above benefits is attained through *Rasayana chikitsa*. The benefits are focused on attaining strength (*balya*), life giving (*Jivaniya*), bulk promoting (*Brmhaniya*) and stabilising the ageing process which is anti-ageing (*Vayahsthapana*)^[4]. *Rasayana* treatment is also an answer to epidemics and acute onset of some diseases according to *Charaka*^[5]. The *Rasayana* medicines are believed to have aphrodisiac qualities as well. The concept of *Rasayana* may also extend to the next generation of human life through the birth of a healthy offspring immune to diseases as well as with the best genetic constitution or with less genetic aberration, as it nourishes the semen. *Amalaki*, *Haritakyadi*, *Triphala*, *Chyavanaprasa* are few out of the long list of *Rasayana*.

NEED FOR RASAYANA THERAPY (REJUVINATION):

Our life style has become very hectic. This is due to over exertion – physical as well as mental, it increases stress. The timing of eating has become irregular due to change in the duties. Due to availability of various gadgets in the kitchen, use of television, mobile phones and computers has resulted in lack of exercise. Many people are becoming

addicted to Alcohol, smoking, excessive sex, too much sleep and drugs, using stale foods with preservatives. This all leads to low *dhatu bala*, low *ojas*, vitiation of all *doshas*; resulting in – premature aging, fatigue, debility, inability to adopt to stress, recurrent illness and depression. It creates a need of *Rasayana* therapy for prevention of occurrence of lifestyle and systemic disorders and to maintain *swasthya*.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES: To explore the role of *Rasayana* therapy in prevention of disease.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Brihat - trayee with their commentaries, supportive text of contemporary medical textbooks, references from relevant websides and journal were appraisal for the study.

LITERARY REVIEW OF RASAYANA

- **Historical View:** The ancient Ayurvedic physicians understood the delicate cellular mechanisms of the body and the deterioration of the functional efficiency of the body tissues. These ancient Ayurvedic masters had thus developed certain dietary and therapeutic measures to arrest/delay ageing and rejuvenating whole functional dynamics of the body organs. *Rasayana* is described elaborately in the four *padas* of the 1st chapter in *chikitsasthana* of *charak samitha*. It is found in 27-29 chapter of *chikitsasthana* of *Sushruta samitha* & in *utteratantra* of *Astangahridya*.
- **Purpose of Rasayana:** *Rasayana* should be used for three purpose mainly- 1. Maintaining health^[6], 2.Prevention of diseases and old age^[7] and 3.To avoid the recurrence of diseases.

- **Criteria for Rasayana:** Ideal age group for receiving *Rasayana* is between 16 yrs to 90 yrs. It is advisable to purify the body with suitable methods of *Panchakarma* (when necessary) or by mild purification so that the person gets maximum benefit. While undergoing *Rasayana* treatment, the person should abstain from smoking, alcohol and other bad habits.^[8]
- **Mode of action of Rasayana :** Can be explained in 3 levels: *Poshaka*, *Agni* and *Srotas*.
 - 1) **Acting at all the levels of rasa:** By directly enriching the nutritional quality of the *rasa* (circulatory plasma). Ex: *Draksha*, *Ksheera*, *Shatavari*,^[9] *Ghrit* and all such direct nutrients.
 - 2) **Acting at the level of Agni:** That is at the level of digestion and metabolism. This group of *Rasayanas* improves the digestion, absorption and metabolism leading in turn to improved nutritional status. Ex: *Bhallataka*,^[10] *Pippali*,^[11] *Haritaki*, *Chitraka*.
 - 3) **Acting at the level of srotamsi:** That is the microcirculatory channels carrying nutrition to the tissue. These *Rasayanas* clean and activate the micro circulatory channel that is *sroto shuddhi* leading to improve micro circulation. Ex: *Guggulu*, *Pippali*, *Rasna* etc. By enriching nutritional quantity of *poshaka rasa* most of the *Rasayana* drugs are *deepana*, *pachana* and hence improve *Agni*, and promote *dhatu poshana*. By promoting competency of *srotas* leading to better bio-availability of nutrients to tissues and improve tissue perfusion.^[12] The second type is a more complicated process and involves total reformation of the body. In such a therapy, the patient is isolated from his/her routine life and is kept in a *kuti* (hut), which is specially designed for *Rasayana-chikitsa*, under the observation of an ayurvedic specialist.

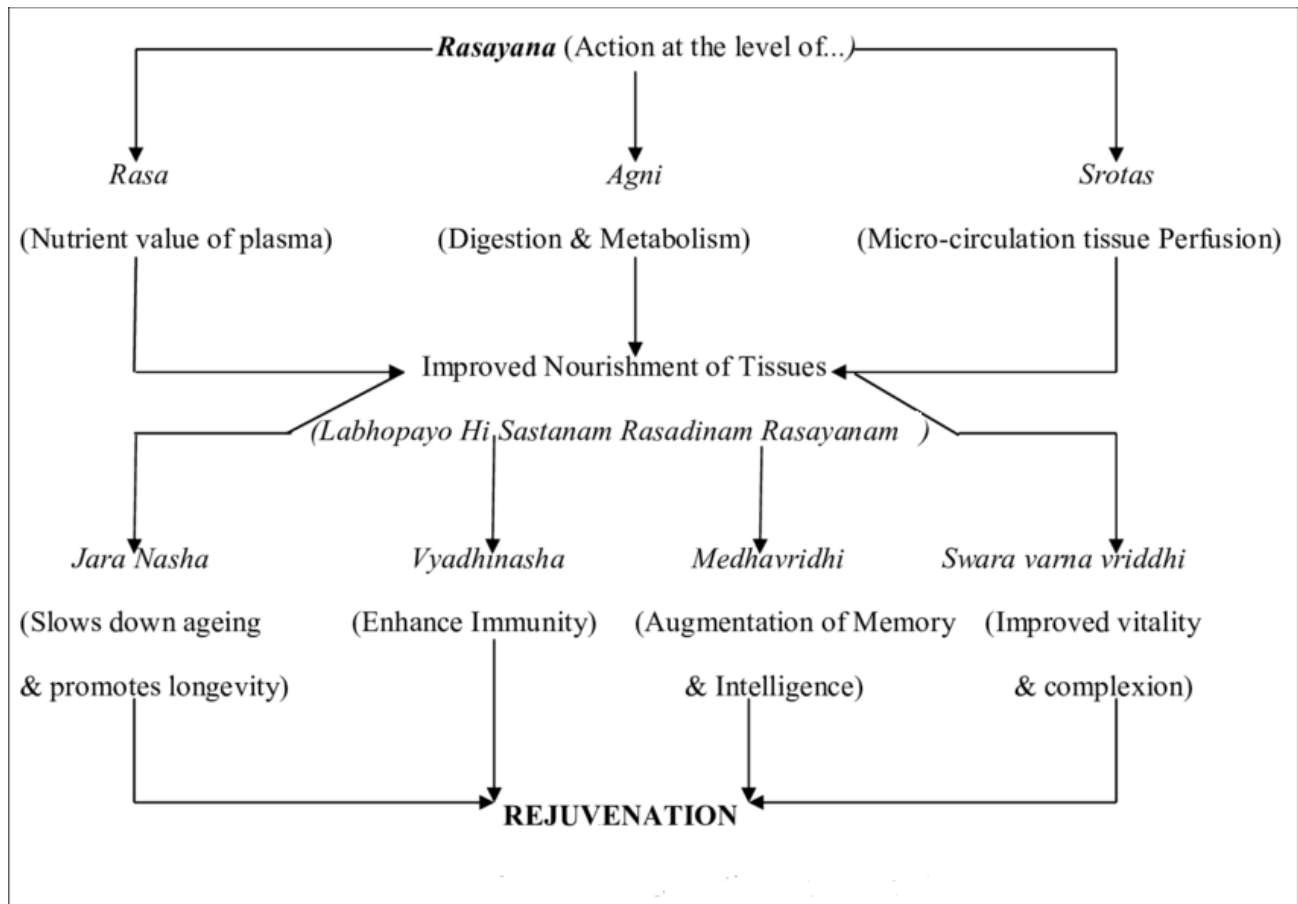


Figure 1: Mode of action of Rasayana.

- Rasayana for different stages of life**
 According to *Sharagdhara Samhita*, all of us tend to lose certain characters and qualities of life during each stage of life,^[13] and hence during every stage of life all persons must take *Rasayana* to protect these qualities.

Table 1: Showing Rasayana drugs according to the age group^[14]

Age Group	Name of declining attribute	Suitable Rasayana
1-10	Balya (Childhood)	Vacha, Suvarna bhasma
11-20	Vridhhi (Growth)	Ashwagandha, Bala
21-30	Chhavi (Beauty)	Amalaki, Loha bhasma
31-40	Medha (Intellect)	Shankhapushpi, Bramhi, Jyotishmati
41-50	Twaka (Nourishment of skin)	Bhringaraj, Priyal
51-60	Drishti (Vision)	Triphala, Shatavari, Loha bhasma
61-70	Shukra (Semen)	Ashvagandha, Kapikacchu, Atmagupta
71-80	Vikrama (Physical)	Bala, Amalaki
81-90	Buddhi (Wisdom)	Brahmi, Shankhapushpi
91 above	Karmendriya (Motor organs)	Ashwagandha, Bala

Table 2 : Showing Rasayana drugs acting on Sapta Dhatu^[15]

Sr. No.	Dhatu	Rasayana Drug
1.	Rasa	Kashmari, Kharjura, Draksha
2.	Rakta	Loha, Amalaki, Bhringaraja, Palandu
3.	Mamsa	Ashwagandha, Bala, Nagabala
4.	Meda	Amrita, Haritaki, Guggulu, Shilajatu
5.	Asthi	Vanshalochana, Laksha, Shukti, Shankha
6.	Majja	Loha, Vasa, Majja
7.	Shukra	Shatavari, Musli ^[16]

Table 3 : Showing Rasayana drugs for Specific system

Sr. No.	System	Rasayana Drug
1.	Respiratory System	Chavanprash, Vardhamana Pippali Rasayana
2.	Digestive System	Pippali, Haritaki, Marich, Bhallataka
3.	Circulatory System	Amalaki, Bhringaraja, Manjishtha, Suvarna bhasma
4.	Muscular System	Ashwagandha, Bala, Kupilu, Rajat bhasma
5.	Adipose System	Guggulu, Shilajit, Haritaki, Guduchi
6.	Nervous System	Shankhapushpi, Bramhi, Ashwagandha, Vacha
7.	Reproductive System	Ashwagandha, kapikacchu, Shatavari, Vidarikanda
8.	Urinary System	Punarnava, Shwadranstha
9.	Excretory System	Kutaja, Vidanga, Triphala
10.	Menstrual System	Ashok, Lodhra, Shatavari
11.	Lactation System	Shatavari, Jeeraka, Milk

Table 4 : Showing various Rasayana drugs for various conditions

Sr. No.	Rasayana Drugs	Conditions
1.	Brahma Rasayana	For attains long and excellent age.
2.	Triphala Rasayana, Nagabala Rasayana	For long life span
3.	Chavanprash Rasayana	Kasa, Shwasaroga, Jaranasak, Hridayaroga, Mutravikara etc.
4.	Agasthya Rasayana, Bhalataka Rasayana	Kapha roga, Shwasa
5.	Jyotishmati, Triphala, Shatavari, Yashtimadhu	Eye disorders (specially vision related disorders)
6.	Pippali Rasayana	Kasa, Svasa, Hikka, Gulma, Pandu, etc.
7.	Aamalaki, Haritaki	Kustha, Udarrogas, Hridayaroga, Pandu, Premeha, etc.

Modern Aspect of Rasayana Therapy:

Rasayana is a science of nutrition. It provides nourishment to all the seven *Dhatus*. Rejuvenation therapy helps to promote and preserve health and to cure disease in the sick. *Rasa* looks a lot like what modern physiology calls lymph and plasma. *Rasayana* / Rejuvenation is the way to restore and maintain the fluids, the juiciness in our bodies. The *Rasayana* therapy has principal object to promote rejuvenation, retard ageing process, defend body from various diseases, regulate metabolism and provide physical and mental strength. This object when analyzed clinically, pharmacologically and biochemically is not indicating a single activity but a number of mechanisms that may vary from compound to compound. The possible mechanisms of action by which *Rasayana* can be correlated in terms of the modern scenario are as follows –

1. Anti-oxidant action of *Rasayana*
2. Immuno-modulatory action of *Rasayana*
3. Anti-stress and adaptogenic action of *Rasayana*
4. Cyto-protective action of *Rasayana*
5. *Rasayana* and telomere
6. Nootropic action of *Rasayana*
7. Anabolic action of *Rasayana*

1. Anti-oxidant action of *Rasayana*

A majority of the present day diseases are reported to be due to the shift in the balance of the pro-oxidant and the antioxidant homeostatic phenomenon in the body. Pro-oxidant conditions dominate either due to the increased generation of the free radicals caused by excessive oxidative stress of the present day life, or due to the poor scavenging/ quenching in the body caused by depletion of the dietary antioxidants (Schulz et al., 2000, Dringen, 2000). Antioxidants play significant role towards the delaying aging, prevention of disease and decreases risk of cancer. Ayurveda described various *Rasayana* drugs such as; *Amla*, *Ashwagandha*,

Guduchi, *Haridra*, *Tulasi*, *Rasona* etc. which offers prompt antioxidant potentials. The Antioxidant activity of these *Rasayana* drugs are due to the presence of constituents such as; vitamin C, carotene, riboflavin, with anolide, tanins, gallic acid and polyphenols. It is believed that *Rasayana* drugs increases collagen fibrin synthesis, absorption of iron and levels of natural antioxidants; dismutase, catalase, glutathione peroxidase therefore reduces risk of oxidative stress.^[17] It is increasingly being realized that many of today's diseases are due to "oxidative stress" that results from an imbalance between formation and neutralization of free radicals. For most biological structures, free radicle damage is closely associated with oxidative damage. If free radicals overwhelm the body's ability to regulate them, a condition known as oxidative stress ensues. A role of oxidative stress has been postulated in many conditions, including atherosclerosis, inflammatory condition, certain cancers and the process of aging. Reduction of free radicals or decreasing their rate of production may delay aging. Antioxidants neutralize free radicals by donating one of their own electrons, ending the electron stealing reaction. They act as scavengers, helping to delay or inhibit cell and tissue damage. The free radicle theory of ageing implies that antioxidants such as vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E will slow the process of ageing by preventing free radicals from oxidizing sensitive biological molecules or reducing the formation of free radicals. *Rasayanans* are rejuvenators, nutritional supplements and possess strong antioxidant activity. They also have antagonistic actions on the oxidative stressors.^[18]

2. Immuno-modulatory action of *Rasayana*

A substance that modifies the immune response or the functioning of the immune

system e.g. by the stimulation of antibody formation or the inhibition of WBC activity. (www.merriam-webster.com) *Rasayana* aids in enhancing metabolism, digestion, and microcirculations, enabling the acquisition of all *Dhatus'* finest attributes. *Rasayana* works on the seven *chakras*, enhancing *Oja*, which strengthens the body's defense against illness. The body receives protection from this *Oja* in two ways: Specifically, through B lymphocytes, which fight bacterial and viral infections, and nonspecifically through neutrophils and monocytes. Humoral mediation by B lymphocytes results in the production of plasma cells and immunoglobulin, which eliminates antigens. Majority of *Rasayana* medicines improve the functions of many different organs by obtaining *Vyadhikshamatva*, which has features that are appetizing, digesting, enhancing cognitive, antioxidant, adaptogenic, and immunomodulatory.^[19]

3. Anti-stress and Adaptogenic action of Rasayana

'Adaptogens' are substances meant to put the organism into a state of non-specific heightened resistance in order to resist stresses and adapt to extraordinary challenges.

Adaptogens are a group of medically effective substances that normalize body functions, strengthen system and functions compromised by stress and have a protective effect against a wide variety of environmental emotional stresses. A drug with *Rasayana* quality can benefit the user in two distinct ways. In one hand, it can neutralize the negative effects of stress on physiology and restore homeostasis i.e. anti-stress effect and on the other hand, a long term administration of such drugs may enhance one's own tolerance levels and thus keep the person to cope up with stress in a better way i.e. adaptogenic effect.

4. Cytoprotective action of Rasayana

In the modern science cyto-protection is explained by the action of proteins. Proteins are present in body in two different fractions:- Tissue proteins, Plasma proteins. It is the tissue proteins which are responsible for forming different tissues and thus for the building up the body. Plasma proteins constitute globulins which are responsible for the body immunity. *Rasayana* drugs correct *Dhatuvyapara* thus lead to production and protection of tissue proteins. Hence it is responsible for building up of the body. It was well known to *Ayurvedic* physician that the delicate cellular machinery of the body suffers from trauma (stress) resulting in wear and tear of different body structure and deterioration of the functional capacity of human being. For cytoprotection, procedures of revitalization and rejuvenation were adopted to increase the power of resistance to disease. Hence *Rasayana* drugs acts as cyto-protective agents.

5. Rasayana and Telomere

Ageing is a multifactorial, irreversible phenomenon regulated by intrinsic and extrinsic factors. There are many causes of ageing like DNA damage free radicals, oxidative stress and shortening of telomere length. Telomeres are responsible for maintaining chromosomal stability. Maintenance of telomere length is regulated by telomerase enzyme. Telomeres shortening has been pointed to as the main factor that speeds up cell ageing and promotes degeneration processes. *Rasayana* may enhance telomerase activity in individuals and thereby delay the onset of ageing process. Ex: *Amalaki Rasayana*. The data indicate that the maintenance of telomere length is facilitated by an increase in telomerase activity upon *Rasayana* administration in aged individuals and *Amalaki Rasayana* may prevent the erosion of

telomeres over a period of time in aged individuals to promote healthy ageing.^[20]

6. Nootropic action of Rasayana

‘Noos’ means mind and ‘tropein’ means turn. “Acting on the mind” i.e. capable of enhancing mental functions. Nootropics (cognition enhancers) 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 mechanism is known. It is assumed that nootropics stimulate existing neural synapses to optimum performance and also for damaging influence, such as disturbances of the energy and neurotransmitter metabolism or ischemia induced damage.

7. Anabolic action of Rasayana

Anabolism is defined as “the building up of complex chemical substances from smaller, simpler components”. (Tortora G.J et.al. 80pp Tortora, at 98pp) Anabolics are substances, which activate the anabolic metabolism. They promote the synthesis of nucleic acids and protein metabolism, thereby assist in general growth. The *Brimhana* effect of *Rasayana* agents though may not have equivalent term in the modern medical parlance, it can be equated with drugs producing anabolic effect. There is a hypothesis that *Rasayana* drugs shows its effect of rejuvenation by its ability to build up the worn out tissue and replenish the nutritional deficient states. Thus *Rasayana* drugs may augment the formation of body tissues (*Dhatuvardhaka*) by supplementing the anabolic metabolism.

IMPORTANCE OF RASAYANA

Details of description are available about *Rasayana* in classical Ayurvedic treatises.

1. *Rasayana* supposed to nourish blood, lymph, flesh, adipose tissue and semen, and thus prevent degenerative changes and illness, thus gives freedom from chronic degenerative disorders like arthritis and senile diseases.
2. *Rasayana* acts through various ways –It improves micro-circulation and thereby produces optimum quality tissues in the body. It also increases the strength of *Agni* and removes waste products from the body. It works as antioxidant, anti-stress, anti-anxiety also.
3. Considering newer techniques of research some very well-known *Rasayana* medicines are explored. *Ashwagandha* is well known medicinal herb used as *Rasayana*. It also shows good effect in relieving pain disability caused in patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. *Amalaki* is told to be the best medicine as *Vayasthapana*. It also found to exert rapid protective effects against lipid peroxidation by scavenging free radicals and reducing the risk of diabetic complications. *Triphala* another abundantly used medicine for various purposes also possesses *Rasayana* effects. Another famous *Rasayana* medicine *Bilva* has also shown strong antitumor and antioxidant activities.
4. Some of the classical Ayurvedic formulations such as *Laxmivilas Ras*, *Agnitundi Vati*, *Ajmodadi Churna*, *Tribhuvankirti Rasa* and *Sitopladi Churna*, when tested for their antioxidant effect, they were found to possess efficient scavenger of superoxide radical, and all medicines were found to possess scavenging activity and inhibitory concentration 50%.^[21]

DISCUSSION:

Rasayana improves the metabolic activities and results in best possible bio-transformation. *Jara Chikitsa* or *Rasayana Chikitsa* promotes rejuvenation in a healthy person and cures the disease of an unhealthy

person. *Rasayana* is not a drug therapy but is a specialized procedure practised in the form of rejuvenative recipes, dietary regimen and special health promoting conduct and behaviour ie, *Achara-Rasayana*. Most of these *Rasayanas* can be used regularly as a food for maintaining balanced mental and physical health. They may be used either alone or along with other modalities of treatment as an adjuvant. These *Rasayanas* serve multifaceted purposes, addressing different aspects of health and well-being. Some are tailored to balance the nervous system, while others focus on rejuvenation, immunity enhancement, strength promotion, energy boosting or reproductive system fortification. The holistic approach of *Rasayana* therapy aligns with *Ayurveda*'s fundamental goal of maintaining equilibrium in the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of human health. The significance of *Rasayana* therapy becomes more apparent when considering its impact on specific bodily functions. By strengthening the *Dhatu*s, *Rasayana* not only promotes immunity but also aids in relieving various illnesses. The extensive array of traditional *Rasayanas* reflects the richness of Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia. From *Brahma Rasayana* for longevity to *Nagabala Rasayana* stabilizing lifespan and *Bhallataka Rasayana* addressing *Kapha* disorders swiftly, each formulation caters to distinct health concerns. The proposed mechanisms of action, such as antioxidant, immunomodulatory, haemopoietic, adaptogenic, antiaging, anabolic, nutritive, and neuroprotective effects, provide a bridge between traditional wisdom and modern scientific understanding. These mechanisms highlight the adaptability of *Rasayana* therapy to address various aspects of human health, making it a versatile and valuable component of Ayurvedic medicine.

CONCLUSION:

Literally means of '*Rasayana*' is "the path of *rasa*", which aims to nourish, restore and balance the body functions or at achieving the maximum body's potential. *Rasayana chikitsa* provides a long, disease free and vigorous life to the person, who undergoes this therapy seriously, as it helps to bring life back to normal. *Ayurveda* gives an insight into what should the treatment aim at – the establishment of *Dhatu Samya*. Hence treatment of any disease would not be complete without using *Rasayana*. Antiageing as one of the focal areas of *Rasayana*, the discussion on controlling the biological clock of ageing through *Rasayana* opens up new areas for research. Unhealthy food, an imbalanced lifestyle, heightened mental stress, and physical exertion can lead to the premature degeneration of body tissues. To address this issue, as it can be challenging for people to fully embrace all ancient principles, incorporating dietary adjustments and following specific guidelines, *Rasayana* therapy can be employed to promote health, happiness, and reduce stress. *Rasayana*, a specialized branch of *Ayurveda*, focuses on enhancing overall well-being and preventing diseases. Its judicious application can contribute to a decreased incidence of numerous health conditions, ultimately alleviating the burden on healthcare. The primary goal is to nourish, rejuvenate, and harmonize bodily functions, maximizing the body's potential. When used correctly, *Rasayana* therapy can facilitate a healthy and joyful long life. In essence, it aids in boosting *ojas*, which enhances *shareerabala*. With the rising prevalence of lifestyle and age-related disorders, *Rasayanas* play a pivotal role in prevention and promotion of individual health.

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