



CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF RASAYANA: A REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is essentially a science, which deals with the philosophy of life. Rasayana tantra is one of the clinical specialties of Ayurveda. It is not only a single drug treatment but also a specialized therapeutic procedure practiced as a major specialty in Indian medicine. Rasayana means the way for attaining excellent Rasa etc. (dhatus). By undergoing through Rasayana method of treatment, an individual draws benefits of longevity, heightened memory, intelligence, health, youthfulness, excellence of luster, complexion & voice, optimum strength of body & senses. As far as Vyadhinashana function of Rasayana dravya is concerned it is not necessary that Rasayana dravya should directly take part into disease de-destroying process i.e. Samprapti-vighata, rather it enhances the quality of dhatus, thereby helps in arresting the steps of 'Shat-Kriyakala' involved in Samprapti. As dhatus are strong there is no more 'Kha-vaigynya' for sthan-samshraya & Vyakti to take place. In other words Rasayana enhances the 'Prohost Resistance' against diseases. Rasayana dravya achieve these functions by acting at various levels, i.e. Rasadhātu, Agni & Srotas. Rasayana enhances the immunity. The administration of the Rasayana drug enhances the process of longevity through immuno-modulation in terms of resisting the disease process or even arresting the production of the disease caused due to infection.

KEYWORDS: Rasayana, Immuno-Modulation, Immunity.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, as the term indicates the science of life, as propounded by the sages & developed over the centuries, is not a system specific medicine, but a holistic medicine in all respect. It is a science having neither a beginning nor an end; a di-vine, all-encompassing medical science promoting universal good, an eternal omniscient system, Ayurveda worth a life-time study. Ayurveda is the world's most ancient system of medicine dealing with every aspects of human life throughout the thousands of years to maintain the physical, mental & social health (well - being). Moreover its therapies detoxify the body, rejuvenate the cells & promote mental well - being. It is giving proper pathway to the people, through which one can avail the ultimate goals of life i.e. four Purusharthas- Dharma, Artha, Kama & Moksha.

It is always being said that 'Prevention is better than cure. In the same way, the aims of Ayurveda are.

1. Restoration of health of a healthy person^[1]
2. Treatment of an ill person^[2]

Ayurveda deals with preventive, promotive as well as curative aspects. The latest definition of Health as brought out by WHO is 'Total Physical, mental, social &

spir-itual well - being & not just absence of a disease' which Ayurveda has been preach-ing over the centuries.

Types-the one which can promote strength (& immunity) & the other that alleviates disorders in ailing.^[3] The former one goes for positive health or for swasthyarakhana i.e. to maintain the physical, mental, social & spiritual well - being of an individual. To pressure this goal, Ayur-veda proposed a specific therapy called as Rasayana therapy'. Rasayana forms one of the eight clinical specialties of Ayur-veda a well-developed science.⁴ Literally Rasayana means the augmentation of Ra-sa, the vital fluid produced by the diges-tion of food, which sustains the body through strengthening of the dhatus.^[5] It consists of a specialized use of certain drugs which are supposed to Prevent ageing & impart longevity. Impart immunity & body resistance against diseases. Improve mental faculties & add vi-tality & luster to the body.

According to Acharya Sushruta, Rasayana - shastra is one of the eight clinical spe-cialties of Ayurveda & its aims are to in-crease longevity to hundred years, to in-crease the power of brain, to improve health & to make a person more active, to remove all morbidity from the body, & to maintain the youth of an individual.^[6]

Acharya Charaka described 'Rasayana' as initiation of Chikitsa - Sthana to prove its major importance in swasthya – rakshana (Restoration of health) as well as Vikara - prashamana (Treatment of an ill person) of diseased person. Rasayana therapy of Ayurveda essentially refers to the process of tissue nourishment & reju-venation. The Rasayana effect retards age-ing & prolongs life. The Rasayana reme-dies encompass a range of drugs, diets & life - style interventions which promote nutritional status of the body & culminate into formation of good qualities of dhatu.

Immunity or Natural immune re-sponse is a physiological reaction executed by the body in order to prevent the disease process or lessen the intensity of disease. One can find the detailed description of immunity in Charak - Samhita & its Commentary by Chakrapanidatta.^[7] 'Vyad-hikshamatwa' means preventive response of subject to the disease. It can be correlat-ed with the concept of immunity. In the context of various current health problems, leading to impairment of immune system; it becomes the need of a time to study the ancient concept of Rasayana to ameliorate the immune system.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To review complete literature on Ra-sayana.
2. To re-establish the concept of Rasayana therapy as described in ancient treatise & its utility in today's context in co-relation with immuno-modulation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literature: Charak-samhita and all avail-able Ayurvedic classics, Modern available texts, Magazines, Journals, M.D. disserta-tions & Research papers.

Type of Study

Conceptual (Saidhantik) Study.

Conceptual Study

Definition of Rasayana

Thera-peutics is of two types - the one which promotes strength (& immunity) in healthy & the other that alleviates disorders in ail-ing. Thus the drugs are of two kinds-one that goes for positive health & other be-longs to the curative group. The group of drugs for positive health is sub-divided into two kinds - one is Vrushya or the virilific & the other is Rasayana or the vi-talizer.⁸ The word Prayah (mostly) de-notes only particularity because both the groups perform both the above functions (promotion of strength including immunity & alleviation of disorders).^[9] Rasayana (promotive treatment) means the way for attaining excellent Rasa etc. (dhatu).^[10] The Rasayana is the drug which destroys aging process & diseases by re - establishing youth & is beneficial for eyes, increases body weight, & acts as a virilif-ic.^[11] The substance which delays aging process & destroys disease is known as Rasayana.^[12]

Characteristics of Rasayana

By undergoing through the Rasayana method of treatment, an individual draws benefits of longevity, heightened memory & intelligence, health, youthfulness, excel-lence of luster, complexion & voice, opti-mum strength of body & senses, utterances that always get fulfilled, the reverence of people body glow.^[13] Rasayana re-establishes youth, strengthens life & brain powers & is capable of removing diseas-es.^[14]

Aims of Rasayana

There are two fold aims of Rasayana therapy.

- Jara nashana or Vayasthapana.
- Vyadhi nashana.

Hence it is important to understand their possible modes of action. As these therapeutic agents and their possible mo-dalities improve both physical and mental faculties and achieve some spiritual bene-fits as well. Hence it seems that they act on dhatu formation process by improving jatharagni, thereby improving digestion and produce the best Rasa dhatu. The quality of other six dhatus also improves as their respective dhatwgnis are also boosted. To achieve this, the srotas of all dhatus are also well maintained and are to be kept without any obstructive lesions. Also if any of the srotas is congenitally weak or is weakened by a previous disease or by external injuries, this weakness is also to be corrected and the local Vyadhik-shamatwa (Immunity) of the srotas is to be boosted. This ensures formation of the best dhatu, which in turn produce oja, the essence of the best parts of all dhatus. This process enhances strength of the mind. Thereby improves mental faculties. This ensures positive thinking and thereby good actions, which help them, earn respect in the society.

Vyadhikshamatva & Immuni-Ty

In this text, it will be quite relevant to know what Ayurveda says about Im-munity. One can find detail description of Immunity in Ayurvedic texts. Chakrapanidatta, the commentator of Charak Sam-hita vividly defines the Vyadhikshamatva (immunity) as the power on the part of the body to prevent the progression of the dis-ease or the powers to successfully resist a developed disease.^[15] Vyadhikshamatva means to tolerate & fight against disease i.e. to prevent disease & to fight against disease after the disease has already pro-duced. Chakrapani's definition is generally applicable to infectious as well as non - infectious diseases. It is definitely stated that all bodies do not have the same power of resistance against all diseases. Individu-als with neither obese nor thin bodies, well built & developed mansa, shonit & asthi dhatus, taking food of optimum quality & quantity, strong body & mind are Vyadhik-shama i.e. they are able to resist any kind of disease & vice – versa.¹⁶ Ayurveda be-lieves that if body is kept perfectly healthy & its bala is maintained at its best, there can be no chances of falling it a prey to any disease. Contrary to above are able to resist. This resistance to disease is called Immunity. The word Immunity means

resistance to a disease because of the formation of humeral antibodies or the development of cellular immunity or both. The word according to Ayurveda is called Vyadhikshamatva. Vyadhikshamatva is mainly of two types:

1. Vyadhibala - Virodhitwa means that type of resistance which minimizes the force or severity of diseases after the disease has already been produced.
2. Vyadhyutpad - Pratibandhakatwa means that type of immunity which prevents the production of disease.

Under the contrary conditions, there occur contrary results. In this concept, Charaka clears the incubation period mild or severe form of disease, acute or otherwise conditions of disease, importance of etiological factors & re-sistance or immunity also. As far as Vyadhinashana function of Rasayana dravya is concerned it is not necessary that Rasayana dravya should directly take part into disease destroying process i.e. Samprapti-vighata, rather it enhances the quality of dhatus, thereby helps in arresting the steps of 'Shat-Kriyakala' involved in Samprapti. As dhatus are strong there is no more 'Kha-vaigunya' for sthan-samshraya & Vyakti to take place. In other words Rasayana enhances the 'Prohost Re-sistance' against diseases. Rasayana dravya achieve these functions by act-ing at various levels, i.e. Rasadhatu, Agni & Srotas.

DISCUSSION

Rasayana is one of the eight clinical specialties of Ayurveda - a well developed science. Rasayana Chikitsa is beneficial to increase the excellent quality of dhatu. Rasayana therapy essentially refers to the process of tissue nourishment & re-juvenation. Rasayana has also the property to cure the diseases. This may be possible by increasing the Prashasta Rasa & the other Dhatu & eliminating the Khavaigunya of that particular srotas or organ (Sroto-Vaigunya). The definition of Rasayana - Tantra in the Sushruta - Samhita is not so elaborate, though one finds an appropriate classification of Rasayana in Dalhana's commentary. One finds an emphasis on ' Naimittika Rasayana ' described as adjuvant to specific curative treatment of certain diseases. The practice of maintaining positive health & longevity through Rasayana therapy was most popular in the period of Charaka when the problem of disease in the community was not so acute. With the passage of time when occurrence of diseases became more frequent due to urbanization of the population, it was but natural for the medical writers to deal more thoroughly with therapeutics than the preventive & positive health aspects of medicine. Thus ' Ra-sayana Tantra ' as an independent discipline has suffered a phase of involution during the post - Charaka period. To maintain a positive health, Vyadhishamat-va plays a vital role which can be correlated with Immunity. Rasayana enhances the immunity. The administration of the Rasayana drug connate the process of longevity through immuno-modulation in terms of resisting the disease

process or even arresting the production of the disease caused due to infection.

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