

Rasayana in perspective of the present scenario

In spite of advancement in medical science with invention of sophisticated investigative tools and deep knowledge of human physiology and its structure, there had been no significant control over diseases, rather new health issues are emerging and in many cases with no remedial solution. These disorders are either metabolic, genetic or infectious in origin. Being a part of health-care delivery system, the time has come to reanalyze the system of health management and look back at the philosophy of prevention and preservation as the first step to the treatment. Every system of medicine emphasizes on treating the disease but in Ayurveda, treating a disease is always secondary rather, maintaining and preserving health which is the first objective of health-care plans. May be for this reason, utmost importance has been given for maintenance and sustenance of health in Ayurveda considering physical, mental, and sexual aspects.

To achieve this goal, daily regimen and seasonal regimen, code of conduct of diet and social behavior are mentioned in Ayurveda along with implication of *Rasayana*. *Rasayana* is one of the comprehensive disciplines of Ayurveda, which comprises a specialized use of herbs, herbomineral formulations, food articles, and lifestyle along with self-discipline with social etiquette to achieve the optimum state of tissues and systems of the body so that there is the least effect of etiological factors on the body. In other words, it can be stated that *Rasayana* is a way to achieve homeostasis and thus retarding the process of aging phenomenon and prevention of diseases. In healthy condition, *Rasayana* can be understood as nutritional dynamics for rejuvenation of body and psyche. Aging in Ayurveda is considered as disease occurring due to the natural process of degeneration and thus, preventing premature aging and making aging in a healthy way is also considered under the aspect of *Rasayana*.

Looking at the multifaceted approach of *Rasayana*, it can be said that a deep analysis of health parameters, its assessment, and its maintenance was the first approach of Ayurveda, and thus, treatment in Ayurveda is defined as all such activities in the form of diet, lifestyle, or medicines which target at *Dhatu Samya* (achieving the state of homeostasis) and not merely treating the disease.

Preservation of health and occurring of disease as per Ayurveda depends basically on how person maintains quality and quantity of food, along with food habits, lifestyle, psychological status, and effect of environmental conditions. Thus, quality and quantity of food plays major role in the health preservation with due consideration of the status of *Agni* (digestion and metabolism mechanics) and suitability of individual depending on his *Prakriti* (body constitution). Considering this fact, healthy food habits

and nutritious food have been considered as *Ajasrika Rasayana* (*Rasayana* in the form of food) which includes nourishing suitable healthy food. Thus, awareness among the society about role of healthy food and food habits has to be reintroduced keeping in mind the present lifestyle of the people. As per Ayurveda, milk, ghee (clarified butter), honey etc. are few examples of such *Ajasrika Rasayana*, and this can be practiced in judicious manner in healthy individuals.

Further, as per Ayurveda with advancing of age, there are certain organ- or system-related changes and replenishing of these structures may postpone many age-related health issues, and thus, *Rasayana* that is age specific can be prescribed for particular age groups, which can ultimately retard age-specific conditions to some extent and can promote longevity. Thus, a plan for *Rasayana* therapy right from birth shall be introduced in routine immunization schedule.

In today's era, human life has been affected by drastic changes in atmosphere, diet and lifestyle and thus, the biggest challenge for humanity is to survive in this changed environment and compete with the pace of life. Further, newly emerging infections and metabolic disorders has posed challenges to health-care systems. To meet this challenge, awareness among mass regarding preventive use of *Rasayana* as prophylactic can be introduced. Some *Rasayanas* are also disease specific and are used in specific disease states as they induce specific immunity and bio-strength to combat a particular disease. Such *Rasayana* is called as *Naimittika Rasayana*. The tissue-specific *Rasayana* drugs can be administered along with the treatment of the underlying disease to enhance the tissue strength and disease-combating power so that faster and better relief may be provided and recurrences may be prevented. Like person in prediabetes state can be given simple herbs like *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia* (Willd.) Hook. f. and Thoms.), *Amalaki* (*Embolia officinalis* Gaertn.) and thus can prevent diabetes. There can be many other *Naimittika Rasayanas* which may be identified by an appropriate trial and few researches in the past have proved their immunomodulating actions. Clinical trials at IPGT and RA Jamnagar have shown that the use of appropriate *Rasayana* drugs such as *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*), *Guduchi* and *Pippali* (*Piper longum*) to the treatment of allergic disorders such as eczema, urticaria, allergic rhinitis, and bronchial asthma helps for better and faster relief and prevents recurrences. Similarly to combat autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis or cancer or pulmonary tuberculosis, advocating *Rasayana* drug as adjuvant to ongoing medicines can also provide encouraging result and improve quality of life of patients. Furthermore,

in stress-induced conditions such as anxiety and insomnia or neurodegenerative conditions such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and senile dementia, administration of *Medhya Rasayana* (nootropics) provides marked improvement in the quality of life of patients.

The findings of all these studies indicate that *Rasayana* has a definite role to play in the maintenance and preservation of health, and appropriate use of *Rasayana* can help to bring down the prevalence of many diseases, ultimately reducing health-care burden. Time has come when more focus shall be done on preventive aspects of diseases, and thus, the present policy of health-care system shall deal with awareness among the mass about *Rasayana* utility. Quality of life is important for an individual, and thus, researches in Ayurveda shall also focus on identifying key areas of application of *Rasayana* and sufficient evidence shall be generated with guidelines so that *Rasayana* therapy can be included in the national health policy and Ayurveda can contribute for the betterment of humanity.

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