

# Rasayana: Understanding Its Concept and Role in Staying Healthy During Ageing

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**Abstract-** Ageing is a natural and inevitable process described in *Ayurveda* as one of the *Swabhavika Vyadhis*. However, due to the modern lifestyle, factors such as unhealthy *Ahara*, lack of *Vyayama*, disturbed *Nidra*, and chronic *Manasika Bhava* contribute to early ageing, or *Akalaja Jara*. *Ayurveda* offers a specialized branch called *Rasayana Tantra*, which focuses on the promotion of health, prevention of diseases, and delay of the ageing process. *Rasayana* is not limited to herbal formulations, it is a comprehensive approach involving balanced diet, *Acharya Rasayana*, and rejuvenating therapies aimed at nourishing all *Dhatus*, enhancing *Agni*, promoting *Ojas*, and improving *Medha*. Classical texts like *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* detail various forms of *Rasayana*, including *Kutipraveshika*, *Vatatapika*, and *Medhya Rasayana*. Herbal drugs such as *Amalaki*, *Ashwagandha*, *Guduchi*, *Shatavari*, and *Brahmi* are well-known for their *Rasayana* properties. Modern research has confirmed their antioxidant, immunomodulatory, neuroprotective, and adaptogenic effects, showing their potential in managing age-related conditions like cognitive decline, anxiety, immune dysfunction, and general debility. This review aims to understand the classical principles of *Rasayana* and their clinical relevance in healthy ageing. Integrating *Rasayana* therapy with modern preventive care can help in achieving *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*, the *Ayurvedic* goal of maintaining the health of the healthy, making it highly relevant in today's geriatric care and lifestyle disorders.

**Key Words:** Ageing, *Rasayana Tantra*, *Rasayana*, *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term *Rasayana* in *Ayurveda* refers to a special approach for promoting health, increasing longevity, improving immunity, and delaying the process of ageing. The word "*Rasayana*" means that which nourishes the *Rasa Dhatu* and helps in the proper formation and transportation of subsequent *Dhatus*. According to *Acharya Chakrapani*, *Rasayana* not only cures diseases but also delays ageing (*Jara*). Classical *Ayurvedic* texts like *Bhavaprakasha* and

*Yogarathnakara* describe *Rasayana* as a therapy that works as *Vayahsthapana*, *Bheshaja*, *Brimhana*, *Chakshushya*, and *Vrishya*. Ageing, or *Jara*, is a natural and unavoidable process, but when it occurs earlier than expected, it is called *Akalaja Jara*.<sup>1</sup> *Ayurveda* defines ageing as "*Vayah Krita Slathamamsady Avastha*", which means the stage where muscles and tissues start to loosen due to advancing age.<sup>2</sup> While *Kalaja Jara* is considered normal and happens with time, *Akalaja Jara* is abnormal and occurs due to wrong diet, poor lifestyle, stress, lack of physical activity, and disturbed sleep.<sup>3</sup> This untimely ageing leads to early tissue degeneration, low immunity, weakness, and age-related diseases. *Ayurveda* believes that *Akalaja Jara* can be prevented and even reversed by following proper health guidelines and adopting *Rasayana Chikitsa*. *Rasayana* includes two main types: *Aushadha Rasayana* (medicinal herbs) and *Acharya Rasayana* (ethical conduct and lifestyle). Important herbs like *Amalaki*, *Ashwagandha*, *Guduchi*, *Shatavari*, and *Brahmi* have shown excellent results in research studies for their antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, immune-boosting, and memory-enhancing effects. These herbs help protect body cells from damage, support brain health, improve stress tolerance, and build natural resistance. *Rasayana* therapy works by nourishing all *Dhatus*, maintaining *Agni*, increasing *Ojas*, and improving *Medha* and *Smriti*. It helps in preventing common problems of old age like fatigue, memory loss, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and low immunity. The concept of *Rasayana* is not just about taking medicines, it is a complete lifestyle approach that includes balanced food, proper sleep, stress-free mind, and discipline in daily habits. In the present time, when early ageing and lifestyle disorders are increasing, *Rasayana* offers a natural and holistic way to stay healthy, active, and mentally strong. This study aims to explore the causes of *Akalaja Jara* and highlight how *Rasayana* can be effectively used to prevent it. By combining *Ayurvedic* wisdom with modern health practices, *Rasayana*

*Chikitsa* can become a valuable tool in promoting healthy ageing and improving quality of life in elderly populations.

## 2. MATERIALS & METHODS

This article is based on an extensive review of classical *Ayurvedic* texts. Relevant information related to the concepts of geriatrics, premature ageing (*Akalaja Jara*), and *Rasayana* therapy has been collected from various *Samhitas* and authoritative *Ayurvedic* literature.

Additionally, supporting content has been gathered from credible online journals and research articles. All the collected material has been carefully examined, organized, and compiled to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject and highlight the relevance of *Rasayana* in promoting healthy ageing.

## 3. DISCUSSION

In *Ayurveda*, the ageing process is referred to as *Jara* which is considered as a natural transformation that occurs over time. However, the classical texts provide in-depth explanations not only of the normal (*Kalaja*) ageing process but also of *Akalaja Jara*, or premature ageing. *Ayurveda* places strong emphasis on the possibility of delaying or minimizing the impacts of ageing through the appropriate use of diet (*Ahara*), behavior (*Achara*), herbal and lifestyle interventions under *Rasayana Chikitsa*.

*Ayurveda* classifies human life into three major stages: *Bala Avastha* (childhood), *Madhyama Avastha* (adulthood), and *Vridhdha Avastha* (old age). Each stage is marked by physiological and psychological changes. Among the classical references, *Acharya Charaka* designates *Bala* as 1–30 years, *Madhyama* as 30–60 years, and *Vridhdha* as 60–100 years. Others like *Sushruta*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and *Kashyapa* offer slightly different classifications, yet all agree that old age involves degeneration and tissue loss (*Dhatu Kshaya*).

In *Vridhdha Avastha*, symptoms such as wrinkling of the skin (*Vali*), greying of hair (*Palitya*), weakening of muscles and bones, decreased libido (*Shukra Apravartana*), and psychological changes like *Smritihani* (memory loss), *Buddhiani* (intellectual decline), and *Utsahahani* (reduced enthusiasm) become evident. However, *Ayurveda* distinguishes between this natural process *Kalaja Jara*<sup>4</sup> and the abnormal early onset of ageing known as *Akalaja Jara*, which results

from improper lifestyle and diet.

*Akalaja Jara* can be correlated with modern concepts of premature ageing, in which biological indicators suggest that the body is older than the actual chronological age. Factors such as improper eating habits, sedentary lifestyle, chronic stress, exposure to pollutants, and emotional disturbances contribute to this condition.

*Ayurvedic* texts, such as *Rasaratna Samuchchaya*, list several causes of premature ageing<sup>5</sup>:

- Excessive physical exertion (*Panthanamatigamana*)
- Exposure to excessive cold (*Atisheeta Sevana*)
- Consumption of unwholesome or incompatible food (*Kadanna Sevana*)
- Sexual overindulgence, especially with elderly partners (*Vridhdhoangana Satatasanga*)
- Mental stress and emotional disturbances (*Manah Pratikula*) These causes can be further grouped into three major categories:

### 3.1 *Ahara* *Nidana* (Diet-related causes):

Overconsumption of certain *Rasa* (tastes) weakens tissue function. For instance, *Lavana Rasa* in excess leads to early greying and hair fall, *Amla* induces bodily looseness, while *Katu* and *Tikta* reduce strength. In modern times, diets high in salt, sour fermented foods, processed items, and stimulants have similar degenerative effects.<sup>6,7,8,9,10</sup>

### 3.2 *Vihara* *Nidana* (Lifestyle-related causes):

Irregular sleeping habits, lack of physical exercise, excessive travel, and overindulgence in sexual activity disturb homeostasis. Sleep-wake cycle disturbances are linked to accelerated ageing and circadian rhythm disruption.

### 3.3 *Manasika Nidana* (Mind-related causes):

Negative emotions like *Kama* (excessive desire), *Krodha* (anger), *Bhaya* (fear), and *Shoka* (grief) suppress digestive and metabolic functions. Chronic psychological stress, even when nutritional intake is adequate, results in improper *Dhatu Poshana* (tissue nourishment) and accelerates ageing.

To counter premature ageing, *Ayurveda* recommends the holistic application of *Rasayana Chikitsa*. The term *Rasayana* is derived from "*Rasa*" (the essence or plasma) and "*Ayana*" (path or movement), indicating a system or method for enhancing the quality of life by promoting the nourishment of bodily tissues.

*Acharya Charaka* defines *Rasayana* as that which improves longevity (*Ayushya*), intellect (*Medha*),

memory (*Smriti*), radiance (*Prabha*), and complexion (*Varna*). *Acharya Sushruta* describes it as *Vayasthapana*, the delay or reversal of age-related degeneration. *Dalhana*, a later commentator, emphasizes its role in the continuous nourishment of tissues, while *Sharangadhara* considers *Rasayana* effective for diseases of old age.

*Rasayana* therapy operates at multiple levels:

- Enhancing *Agni* (digestive fire) to promote better digestion and metabolism
- Clearing *Srotas* (micro-channels) to facilitate efficient nutrient distribution
- Improving *Dhatu* quality leading to enhanced vitality and immunity

The ultimate outcome is the development of *Ojas*, the subtle essence of all *Dhatus*, which symbolizes physical strength, mental clarity, and immunity.

There are two primary approaches to *Rasayana*<sup>11</sup>:

- 3.4 *Aushadha Rasayana* (Herbal rejuvenators): Includes drugs like *Amalaki*, *Ashwagandha*, *Guduchi*, *Brahmi*, *Shatavari*, and others. These herbs are rich in antioxidants and have shown efficacy in reducing oxidative stress, supporting nervous system function, enhancing immunity, and improving stamina and memory. Their mechanisms involve free radical scavenging, modulation of inflammatory cytokines, and improved mitochondrial activity.
- 3.5 *Achara Rasayana* (Behavioral rejuvenation): This unique concept emphasized by Charaka involves ethical behavior, spiritual discipline, and a balanced lifestyle. Attributes like truthfulness (*Satyavadi*), non-violence (*Ahimsa*), absence of anger (*Akrodha*), compassion (*Karuna*), and respect for elders and teachers foster a calm and stable mental state. These qualities ensure harmony between body and mind, thus preventing stress-related degeneration.

Scientific studies now corroborate these *Ayurvedic* concepts. For example, chronic stress activates the HPA axis, resulting in excessive cortisol secretion, hippocampal damage, and cognitive decline. Practices advocated in *Achara Rasayana*<sup>12</sup>, such as truthfulness, meditation, and emotional control, can reduce stress, balance neurohormonal responses, and protect against premature ageing.

Moreover, regular and adequate sleep-*Samajagara Swapna*-is stressed in *Ayurveda*. Recent data support

that maintaining a stable circadian rhythm reduces age-related hormonal disturbances and enhances tissue repair. Disruption of circadian rhythms is linked with metabolic disorders, decreased immune function, and neurodegeneration.

Daily intake of *Ksheera* (milk) and *Ghrita* (ghee), both described as *Satvika Ahara*, is recommended as *Nitya Rasayana*. These substances enhance *Rasa Dhatu*, improve *Ojas*, and aid in tissue lubrication.<sup>13</sup> Modern research has shown their roles in gut health, reducing inflammation, and improving lipid-soluble nutrient absorption. When used as *Anupana* (vehicle) with herbs, they enhance bioavailability and efficacy.

Modern society, with its sedentary lifestyle, processed food habits, emotional stress, and irregular schedules, mirrors many of the causative factors of *Akalaja Jara*. Fast food, lack of physical exercise, digital screen exposure disrupting sleep, and social isolation all contribute to early signs of physical and cognitive decline. The comprehensive approach of *Rasayana*—including *Ahara*, *Vihara*, and *Achara*—offers a holistic and preventive model to address these concerns.

*Rasayana* therapy doesn't merely address symptoms but works at the root level by enhancing metabolism, promoting tissue regeneration, supporting neurocognitive health, and increasing resistance to diseases. It is sustainable, non-toxic, cost-effective, and adaptable to modern lifestyles when appropriately interpreted and applied.

Furthermore, *Achara Rasayana* provides an ethical framework for living that aligns with modern principles of mental well-being, social harmony, and preventive healthcare. Its benefits are not confined to the individual but extend to society, promoting collective health and longevity.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

*Akalaja Jara*, or premature ageing, can be effectively prevented by adopting a healthy, stress-free lifestyle guided by *Ayurvedic* principles. Regular practice of *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, and *Achara Rasayana* helps maintain physical, mental, and emotional balance. *Achara Rasayana*, in particular, promotes longevity and immunity through ethical conduct, discipline, and mindfulness. This holistic, cost-effective approach enhances the quality of life, delays ageing, and fosters disease resistance. Embracing *Ayurveda* not only supports healthy ageing but also empowers individuals to lead a purposeful and vibrant life, naturally and

sustainably.

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