

# CHAPTER-12

## INTEGRATING AYURVEDIC GERIATRICS AND RASAYANA THERAPY FOR ADDRESSING AGING CHALLENGES

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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.52458/9788196830069.nsp.2024.eb.ch-12>

**Ch.Id:-**GU/NSP/EB/GHTAGA/2024/Ch-12

## **ABSTRACT**

*This research addresses the imminent global population surge to 1.5 billion by 2050, especially in developing nations like India, and the accompanying surge in chronic non-communicable diseases among the elderly. By investigating Ayurvedic principles such as Dincharya, Ritucharya, Ratricharya, and advocating the avoidance of suppressing Dharniya Vegas, the study underscores the significance of preventive healthcare. It scrutinizes Rasayana therapy, a crucial facet of Ayurveda, for its role in enhancing longevity and fortifying resilience against ailments. The study classifies Rasayana into Vatatapika, Kutipravesik, Kamyā, Naimittika, and Ajasrika approaches, each contributing to physical vigor, cognitive capabilities, and overall well-being. Prabhava is explored through Samshodhana and Samshamana Rasayana, elucidating their impacts on reinforcing the body's innate defenses against existing illnesses. This research succinctly provides insights into amalgamating Ayurvedic geriatrics and Rasayana therapy as a comprehensive strategy to tackle the health challenges posed by an swiftly aging global population, with a focus on preventive measures and overall wellness.*

**Keywords:** *Geriatrics, Jara, Kayachikitsa, Rasayana, Aging, Ayurveda*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The world is currently confronting an unprecedented predicament. In the coming years, the percentage of elderly individuals will exceed that of youngsters, and the number of people reaching an extremely old age will reach new proportions. The projected expansion of the population aged 65 or over is anticipated to rise from around 524 million in 2010 to nearly 1.5 billion by 2050. This growth is mostly attributed to the increasing population in developing nations, particularly India. The incidence of chronic non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes, is increasing in emerging countries as a result of lifestyle and nutritional modifications, as well as the ageing population. Ayurveda, the scientific exploration of existence, principally concentrates on all aspects of existence in connection to well-being and the prevention of ailments. To enhance lifespan and avoid diseases, certain protocols and treatments have been identified, among which Rasayana therapy is included. Rasayana therapy exerts a beneficial influence not only on the physical dimension but also on the mental side. Geriatrics is a branch of modern medical research that concentrates on improving the health of older adults by preventing and treating diseases and disabilities. Rasayana therapy is considered the main treatment approach for geriatrics, since it has the capacity to effectively prevent a wide range of geriatric disorders, therefore facilitating the achievement of geriatric objectives.

## **2. JARA CHIKITSA**

It is a division of Ashtanga Ayurveda. Geriatrics is a scientific discipline that focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of health issues and ailments affecting older individuals. Ageing is the cumulative process of physiological changes that ultimately result in the death of an individual. Vridhavastha refers to the stage where older folks have reached a state of dhatu kshaya. Charak defines Vridhavastha as being above the age of 60, whereas Sushruta and Vagabhatta define it as being above the age of 70. Vridhavastha, or old age, is marked by the gradual decline of bodily tissues, sensory abilities, physical strength, vitality, and enthusiasm. As time passes, individuals experience the development of wrinkles, greying of hair, the onset of secondary health conditions, and a decreased ability to do daily activities. Vatadosha is prevalent in the elderly population. Therefore, there will be an increase in catabolic activities occurring within the body. Regular use of rasayana can help maintain one's health and slow down the ageing process.

Geriatrics, also known as Jara Chikitsa, is a specialised field of medicine that focuses specifically on the challenges associated with ageing and the ailments that affect older individuals. The term is derived from the Greek word "geron," which translates to "old man," and "iatros," which translates to "healer." Ageing is marked by progressive structural alterations that occur over time and are not attributable to any pathological condition. From an Ayurvedic perspective, our Acharyas have assigned great significance to it and regarded it as one of the fundamental components of Ayurveda. Vridhavastha, often known as old age, refers to the stage of life when an individual has already reached the state of Vriddhi. Acharya Charaka defines Vridhavastha as the age above 60 years, while Acharya Sushruta and Vagbhata consider it to be the age above 70 years. This stage is characterised by a decrease in bodily tissues, sensory faculties, strength, vitality, and enthusiasm. As time passes, individuals develop wrinkles, grey hair, and baldness. They also experience secondary disorders such as cough, difficulty breathing, and an inability to perform daily activities. According to Acharya Vagbhata, Vata Dosha is the most prominent in old age and is also known as Hani Avastha. Therefore, an increase in catabolic activity inside the body might contribute to the development of several chronic diseases such as dementia, parkinsonism, hypertension, and cerebrovascular diseases. To maintain good health and delay age-related issues, it is important to adhere to Swasthavritta principles such as Dincharya (daily routine), Ritucharya (seasonal routine), Ratricharya (nightly routine), not suppressing Dharniya Vegas (natural urges), and adopting Rasayana (rejuvenation) practices.

### **3. RASAYANA THERAPY**

Rasayana is a term that pertains to food and its role in the development of optimal attributes of Dhatus, such as the cells and tissues of the body. This process results in enhancements in the physiological state, immune system, physical strength, mental abilities, and lifespan. Rasayana therapy encompasses a wide range of benefits, including promoting positive nutrition, enhancing the immune system, increasing longevity, and maintaining mental and sensory abilities. In addition to promoting mental and physical health and rejuvenation, it also has a preventive function in combating a wide range of ailments by enhancing immunity and bio-strength. Therefore, Rasayana therapy is a crucial element of Ayurvedic geriatrics and the provision of healthcare for the elderly.

The utilisation of stimulating chemicals for the well-being of individuals who are already in good health typically involves Vrsya (aphrodisiacs that enhance semen potency) and Rasayana (rejuvenating agents). The science of chemistry is the study of the properties, composition, and behaviour of matter, as well as the changes it undergoes during chemical reactions. It also encompasses the application of this knowledge to improve health and treat diseases.

Rasayana tantra is a branch of Ayurveda that outlines techniques for delaying the ageing process, enhancing longevity, intelligence, strength, and the ability to combat ailments.

### **4. RASAYANA CLASSIFICATION**

**According to the prescribed procedure:**

- i. Vatatapika Rasayana, often known as casual outdoor practice
- ii. Kutipraveshik Rasayana refers to an intense treatment approach that includes Panchakarma, a traditional Ayurvedic detoxification process. This treatment involves the use of a specially developed therapy chamber called Trigarbha Rasayanakuti.

**According to the extent of application:**

- i. **Kamya Rasayana** - designed to enhance the well-being of individuals who are already in good health, further categorised as
  - a) **Shree Kamya** - For the purpose of enhancing radiance and aesthetics
  - b) **Prana Kamya**- To enhance lifespan

- c) **Medha Kamya** - Aimed at enhancing cognitive abilities.
- ii. **Naimittika Rasayana**- refers to the practice of enhancing the body's natural defences in order to help a sick individual better combat their existing illness.
- iii. **Ajasrika Rasayana**- is a daily dietary approach that involves taking Sattvika, which are sustaining parts of the diet.

**According to the concept of Prabhava (Effect):**

- i. Samshodhana Rasayana
- ii. Samshamana Rasayana

The term "Rasayana" is formed from the combination of the base words "Rasa" and "Aayana". The term "Rasa" has multiple meanings, including Rasa Dhatu, Aahara Rasa, and Shadrasa. However, in this particular context, "Rasayana" can be seen as referring to the Rasa Dhatu itself. The word "Aayana" denotes movement, therefore Rasayana can be defined as a dynamic process that nourishes the body by promoting the right formation of Dhatus. Additionally, it enhances critical processes and safeguards against degeneration. According to Acharya Dalhana, Rasayana refers to a process that promotes the continuous sustenance of Rasadi Dhatus, hence replacing them. Acharya Sushruta classified Rasayana as a Vayasthapaka, which means it slows down the ageing process and improves the length of life. According to Acharya Sharangdhar, Rasayana can be characterised as a remedy that treats ailments that occur as a result of ageing. Acharya Charaka has emphasised the significance of Rasayana and provided a detailed description of its properties. According to Acharya Charaka, Rasayana is a substance that promotes longevity, enhances memory (Smriti) and intellect (Medha), and contributes to overall health (Arogya). It also helps maintain youthfulness and improves complexion (Prabha) and skin tone (Varna), among other benefits.

## **5. MECHANISM OF ACTION**

Our Rasayana therapy focuses on enhancing Agni, which in turn promotes the proper construction of Rasadi dhatus. This process is responsible for the creation of Ojas, which is considered the vital essence of these Rasadi Datus. Vyadhi Kshamtva is the factor that ensures the proper functioning of the body's immune system. Therefore, Rasayana plays a pivotal role in the prevention of ageing and age-related diseases. According to our traditional texts, Rasayana therapy focuses on enhancing Agni, which in turn promotes the healthy development of Rasadi Dhatus. This process is responsible for the generation of Ojas, which is regarded the essential component of these Rasadi Dhatus. The immune system's appropriate functioning in terms of Vyadhi Kshamatva is

essential for maintaining the body's health. Therefore, Rasayana plays a vital role in preventing ageing and age-related illnesses. Additionally, it improves physical strength and cognitive abilities. Various Ayurvedic texts have provided varied definitions of Rasayana, yet they all revolve around the same fundamental concept.

Srotas	Possible Rasayanas
Respiratory	Pippali, Bhallatak, Amalaki, Maricha, Kasturi
Gastrointestinal	Panchakola, Kapardika, Hingu, Nagakesar
Erythropoetic	Loha Bhasma, Ghrita, Gorochana,
Musculoskeletal	Ativisha, Suwarna bhasma
Reproductive	Ksheera, Vanga bhasma
Urinary	Shilajatu, Gokshura, Punarnava
Rectal-Intestinal	Kutaja, Bilwa, Hareetaki

Possible Rasayanas based on Organ System

## 6. CONCLUSION

The primary objective of Ayurveda is to preserve the well-being of an already healthy individual, known as Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshnam. To ensure the well-being of an individual, it is advisable to adhere to the principles of Swasthavritta. Rasayana therapy is a method used to counteract the effects of ageing. In today's world, people often lead inactive lifestyles and have unhealthy eating habits, which are the primary factors causing metabolic imbalance and premature ageing. Our Acharyas do a thorough analysis of these Rasayana remedies. Individuals who wish to achieve longevity, vitality, and happiness should diligently engage in Rasayana therapy, following the prescribed protocol with utmost dedication.

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