

## IMMUNOMODULATION AND CONCEPT OF RASAYANA IN AYURVEDA; A REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

In the present day scenario of pandemic; immunity against any infection had gained attention of everyone. Immunity plays an important role in maintaining sound mind and body health. Modern day classification of immunity as innate and acquired immunity can be considered under the title of *Rasayana* and *Vajikaran* therapies. These therapies are been described as *Swasthya urjaskar chikitsa* – health promoting therapies. New infections like Covid or earlier infections of tuberculosis, herpes etc. have impact on one's immune response. In immunocompromised disorders, Ayurveda emphasis on strengthening the host against any such disorders. Here *Rasayana* plays important role. Several drugs mentioned in Ayurveda classics have the immunomodulatory properties and works by altering immune response on systemic as well as cellular level.

**KEYWORDS:** *Rasayana*, *Vajikaran*, immunomodulatory drugs, *Ayurveda*.

## INTRODUCTION

Immunity plays an important role in protecting ones health from various infectious diseases. There are many factors which can stimulate or suppress the immune system. According modern research our immunity is mainly conferred by lymphocytes – a type of white blood cell and antigens presenting cells. This is a part of circulating blood and resides in various lymph nodes all over the body. Major portion of lymphocytes are of B and T lymphocytes. Their action is triggered by various cytokines secreted by different factors in response to foreign bodies, disease causing agents, toxins etc. the production of these cytokines can generate an immune response which occurs naturally – innate or is induced i.e. acquired. Here Ayurveda has a part to act. Number of drugs mentioned under the title of *Rasayana* may act in generating this immune response. In Ayurveda the definition of *Rasayana* itself conveys in brief that the drugs/methods/food used which are beneficial for all *Dhatu*. *Dhatu* formed in its optimum quality ultimately builds host immunity can thus this person is less prone to infections. As in day to day life we had observed many times that one in a group of person gets infected when exposed to common predisposing factors. This relates to optimum quality of their *Dhatu* thus formed. *Dhatu* in turn are formed by its *Mool sthana* – organ of origin. So in this way *Dhatu* covers number of important organs in body and its optimum quality can be referred as its pure sound cellular health. Many single herbs, mineral origin

drugs and special medicated preparations are mentioned in Ayurveda classics for this purpose. Here an attempt is made to enlist those drugs which are readily available and its practice is in vogue.

Concept of *Rasayana* in Ayurveda

## Definition

As stated in *Charaka samhita*, these are the procedures/ drugs/ foods which act beneficial for producing optimum quality of all *Dhatu*.

The word is made up of *Rasa* and *Ayana*. *Rasa* which primarily means the essential vital liquid content present in body (*Sapta dhatu Saar*) and *Ayana* means the path or channel to the same. So this provide proper growth, sharp intellect, helps to stay young and maintains sound general health.

Out of eight branches of Ayurveda; *Rasayana* and *Vjikan* are mentioned for health promoting therapies. These therapies are been practiced in non-diseased and all age group individuals. This are rightly mentioned as *Swasthya* and *Urjaskar* methods of health keeping. Here *Urjaskar* - can be correlated to optimum immunity of a person. The cause of disease formation is either vitiation of *Tridosha* or ageing. In both the cases *Rasayana* therapy helps to promote health of the individual. The drugs mentioned having *Rasayan* properties shows anti-ageing effect on body tissues. The ever increased stress in day to day life had fasten the process of oxidation

which in turn accelerate ageing process. *Rasayan* drugs lowers this stress levels and also has anti-oxidant

properties and hence slows down the processes of ageing.

**Table number 1**  
**Classification of *Rasayana***

No.	Classification	Remark
1.	<i>Kutipraveshtik rasayana</i>	One has to stay in a specifically made <i>Kuti</i> – hut to get the <i>Rasayana</i> benefit.
2.	<i>Vatatpik rasayana</i>	<i>Rasayana</i> that can be given to everyone while he can continue his daily routine.
3.	<i>Kamya rasayana</i>	<i>Rasayana</i> used for specific purpose.
4.	<i>Naimittik rassayana</i>	<i>Rasayana</i> given for limited time phase
5.	<i>Ajasrik rasayana</i>	<i>Rasayana</i> used in from of food
6.	<i>Vardhaman rasayana</i>	Dose of <i>Rasayana</i> drug increased and tapered in specific manner
7.	<i>Achaar rasayana</i>	Code of conduct to be followed in society
8.	<i>Medhya rasayana</i>	<i>Rasayana</i> used for improving intellect and which works on mind.
9.	<i>Dravya rasayana</i>	Single herbs/ poly herbal/ herbo-mineral drugs used as <i>Rasayana</i> in form of medicines

#### ***Haritaki (Terminalia Chebula)***

It is one of the prime drug mentioned in Ayurveda which has *Rasayana* properties. Seasonal intake of *Haritaki* with different *Anupana* is indicated in *Rutu Haritaki* for maintaining health. Feluric, vanillic and caffeic acids along with phloroglucinol and pyrogallol are isolated from fruit which shows high anti-oxidant properties. Ether extracts of the same had showed higher anti-oxidant property.

#### ***Amalki (Emblia officinalis)***

It is the only fruit having the ample amount of vitamin C in it. Vitamin C has the rejuvenating effect on soft tissues of the body and also plays important role in building ones immunity. The fruit contains threefold protein and 160 folds ascorbic acid as that to an apple. It has mark effect on blood constituents and also replenishing effect on major organs such as liver, spleen, kidneys and brain.

#### ***Yashtimadhu (Glycyrrhiza glabra)***

It is included in *Medhya rasayana* by Acharya Charaka and also in *Jevaniya gana*. Its extract glycyrrhetic acid is used for viral infections and also its tropical preparations are been used for herpes, eczema, psoriasis. Many medicated poly herb *Rasayana* preparations have this as its one of the main ingredient.

#### ***Lashuna (Allium sativum)***

It is used as both medicine as well as used in day to day food. Its component Allicin acts as strong antibiotics. It also acts as bacteriostatic, fungicidal, anthelmintic, and hypoglycemic. It is known for its use in lowering lipid levels, thus have heart protective effect and prevent from further metabolic complications.

#### ***Bhallatak (Semecarpus anacardium)***

It is the prime *Rasayana* mentioned in Ayurveda. It has *Tridosha* balancing property. Among which it mainly acts on *Vata* and *Kapha dosha* and diseases caused by them. Extracts shows anti-inflammatory and antitumor activity.

#### ***Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia)***

It is well known for its immunomodulatory effect. It is rightly called as *Amuta*; meaning nectar which can be used for any disorder. Extracts and alkaloids of *Guduchi* shows antipyretic, anti-inflammatory, antirheumatic, hypoglycemic and hepatoprotective activity. As a single herbal drug and along with other poly herbal combination it is widely used for this purpose.

Apart from above mentioned herbs other drugs which are used vividly are; *Neem*, *Shatavari*, *Ashwagandha*, *Pippali*, *Guggulu*, *Kumari*, *Bramhi*, *Punarnava*, *Tulsi*, *Bala* etc. other mineral origin preparations include *Bhasma* of *Suvarna*, *Rajat*, *Suvarna makshik*, *Loha*, *Vanga* and *Jasada*.

Poly herbal preparations and herbo-mineral preparations include *Chawanprash Avleha*, *Bramha Rasayana*, *Amrut bhallatak*, *Ashwagandhadi leha*, *Narsimha Rasayana*, *Rasasindoor*, *Makardhwaj*, *Suvarnavanga* etc.

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