Rasaayana therapy of Ayurveda—An eye-witness account of Kaayaakalpa (Rejuvenation)

K C Chunekar
K 18/7, Ratan Phatak, Varanasi-221 001, India

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The article deals with the Kaayaakalpa. It is one of the processes of Rasaayana therapy for complete rejuvenation. It is based on the process mentioned in Ashtaangahridayam (1st century A.D.) and also referred in Charaka and Sushruta Samhitas (1000 B.C.). The therapy was performed more than 50 years back in Varanasi. The person was kept for about a month in a specially prepared 3-fold Kuti (room) and was administered specially prepared Aamalaki fruits (Embllica officinalis Gaertn.), cow’s milk, cow’s ghee and honey. The results were very encouraging.

Keywords: Rasaayana, Kaayaakalpa, Rejuvenation, Ashtaangahridayam, Vaaghbatha, Aamalaki, Emblica officinalis.

Ayurveda is the science of life. It considers life as a combination of Satwa (mind), Aatmaa (soul) and Sharira (body). Thus life is an integrated psychosomatic spiritual entity and the purpose of Ayurveda is (i) to preserve the health of the healthy normal person, and (ii) to cure the disease in a patient.

Rasaayana is a unique therapy of Ayurveda and is one of the eight gross divisions of Ashtaanga Ayurveda which consists of Shalya (surgery), Shaalaakya (Eye & E.N.T.), Kaaya-Chikitsaa (general medicine), Bhuta-Vidyaa (demomology, psychiatry), Kaumaarabhriitya (pediatrics), Agadatantra (toxicology), Rasaayana (Rejuvenation) and Vaajikarana (dealing virility and fertility). The word Rasaayana is defined in short by Charaka as follows: It means that all the measures and drugs which help in increasing the seven Dhaatus (tissues) i.e. 1. Rasa (plasma), 2. Rakta (blood), 3. Maamsa (muscle), 4. Medas (fat), 5. Asthi (bone), 6. Majjaa (bone-marrow) and 7. Shukra (semen, internal secretions) of good quality and thereby improve health and increase longevity. Sushruta defines Rasaayana as follows: This division deals with the methods to maintain youth, to increase longevity, intellectual capacity and strength as well as to enable the patient to be freed from diseases. Here, Dalhana, the great field botanist of Ayurveda of 10th century A.D., explains that Rasaayana not only maintains youthful life for 100 years but even keeps body strong physically as well as mentally.
beyond 100 years, removing different diseases.

According to Charaka the benefits of Rasaayana therapy in general, are as below: It helps in increasing age, memory and mental retention power, improves general health and causes youthful life. It improves lustre, complexion and voice, gives much strength to body and senses, and causes command over speech, respectfulness and brilliance.

Thus application of this specialised branch of Ayurveda makes body new by vitalising a healthy person. It also eradicates diseases and thereby increases longevity along with vigour and strength. Apart from transforming body it also transforms mental abilities as will be observed from special recipes described as Medhya Rasaayana. In short it works like Amrita (nectar).

This therapy is not a simple method of treatment that can be given in the form of a pill or decoction but is a long process continued for days, weeks, months or even years. It has to be followed scrupulously with all sorts of instructions and rituals and certain restrictions during different processes. It has to be started only after the body is purified by special process known as Panchakarma which is another very important and effective therapy of Ayurveda. These five purifications are: (i) emesis, (ii) purgation, (iii) oily enema, (iv) non-oily enema and (v) snuffing. Before starting these, (a) oleation and (b) sudation are performed. Some simple methods of purification are also suggested. Its necessity is explained by the example that as the application of dye to a dirty cloth does not give proper colour, in the same way without previous purification, full desired effects may not be achieved.

Rasaayana therapy is done in two ways, in the first, the patient has to be confined in a secluded room (Kuti) specially prepared for this purpose for a specified period. This method is known as ‘Kutipraaveshika-Rasaayana’. In the second the patient is ambulatory and is known as ‘Vaataatapika Rasaayana’ i.e. he is not protected from the wind and the Sun. The first is considered more effective.

In the first method a very special type of three-fold room (Kuti) each covering the other from all sides is built in a suitable place where every essential facility would be available (Fig. 1). The walls are thick. The room has small ventilators but has sufficient light and is clean and free from sound pollution, and with no entry for women. The room is pleasant and comfortable for the patient in every season. The treatment is started with all religious rites at suitable time under the influence of auspicious stars.

Apart from these things, religious way of living with high morals and virtues, known as Aachaara-Rasaayana, if followed along with the above, gives full beneficial results. Sushruta has clearly denied Rasaayana for such persons who are intemperate, lazy, poor, careless, immoral, sinful and who disregard medicine.

Many procedures, easy as well as very difficult to perform, using simplest as well as complex divine drugs which are not known at present, have been mentioned in different classical texts. In this
article textual information from the three classical texts, out of which Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita are older than 1000 B.C. and Ashtaangahridaya Samhita relates to the 1st century A.D., has been compiled. Vaagbhata, the composer of Ashtaangahridayam and Sushruta both have suggested a very simple recipe. Cold water, milk, honey and Ghrita, if taken early in the morning singly or after mixing any two, three or all the four together would give longevity to the person\textsuperscript{4,5}. Contrary to this, Sushruta has narrated several processes using divine drugs like Soma, its 24 varieties and 18 other similarly powerful drugs, which are rather impossible to perform these days due to different reasons\textsuperscript{9}. 

Fig. 1—Schematic ground view of Kuti
Vaagbhata having understood the difficulties in performing very elaborate methods using divine drugs like Soma, has not mentioned such recipes and has prescribed many simpler recipes considering the socio-economic conditions prevailing at that time. He has described a simpler process of Kutipraaveshika-Rasaayana, which was performed in Varanasi and was very effective. Though the patient did not get new hairs, teeth or nails as claimed but he enjoyed so much vigour and strength in his old age, which he never experienced in his younger age. The author was fortunate to observe this programme being performed about 50 years back. It was performed by the author’s father late Pt. Srinivas Shastri Vaidya under the supervision of late Pt. Tryambak Shastri Vaidya Ratna on late Shri L.S. Kher, the then Income-tax commissioner in Varanasi. He was uncle of late Shri A.G. Kher, speaker in Lucknow assembly.

A brief report of this procedure is as follows: A Kuti (residing place) was built as described earlier, in Varanasi near Sarnath. In this procedure of Vaagbhata, only Aamalaki (the fruit of Emblica officinalis Gaertn., commonly known as Aanwalaa or Aaonlaa) along with Ghrita and honey is used as medicine followed by cow’s milk. No other medicine or dietetic article was used. Aamalaki is prepared (cooked) in a special way. Firstly a straight hole of 1 meter depth with a diameter of Aanwalaa fruit, is made into a long straight and clean (devoid of worms) part of the trunk of Palaasha-tree [Butea monosperma (Lam.) Taub.]. For this, whole jungle of Palaasha was reserved to get one trunk daily for about a month. The hole is filled with fresh fruits of Aanwalaa and the wood is covered by Darbha-grass (Imperata cylindrica Beauv.) and again covered by mud obtained from ponds where lotus grows. For this, truck-load of mud was obtained from a distant place. Then the wood, so prepared is put into the fire of dry cowdung collected from jungles. Such cooked Aanwalaa after removing the seeds is given to the patient with Ghrita and honey followed by milk up to the satisfaction. The procedure was repeated daily for a month. As it was a first experiment, there were so many hurdles and setbacks right from the beginning. There were discussions mainly on the construction of Kuti—regarding its 3 coverings, size, structure, ventilators, doors, etc. While undergoing the procedure, the patient who was purified by Shodhana therapy got indigestion due to over drinking of milk. This was due to misinterpretation of the instruction by the patient himself. Duration of the procedure was not extended due to his personal commitments. In spite of all these, it was a very successful attempt. Full benefits like getting new hair, nail and teeth could not be achieved due to different reasons but when Sri Kher came out of the Kuti, his face was shining like lotus. After about a month, he wrote a letter from Nainital that he is experiencing so much of vigour and strength at that old age which he never felt in his young age. Whenever he used to come to Varanasi he would show his strength and stamina by running. Actually Rasaayana is indicated before the middle age. This may be an important factor for lesser benefits.
There are reports of such experiments having been done in various parts of our country at different times but there is no authentic record of first hand information, which may be obtained. However, this Kaayaakalpa process got a bad name when it had bad effects on late Pt. Madan Mohan Malviyaji, the founder of Banaras Hindu University. Unfortunately it was not done properly according to the classics and the conductor was unqualified.

The author wants to emphasize to the authorities and the learned scholars, the need to make arrangements for repeating this procedure of Ashtaaangahridayam, which is comparatively easy and there would be no harm at all if performed upon human volunteers. Personally the author does not believe on animal experiments for Ayurvedic procedures. It may be conducted for preliminary screening particularly for toxicity of unknown plants.

In case of the choice of the drugs, it is observed that Vaagbhata has totally omitted the use of divine drugs whereas Sushruta has advocated so many such drugs. In Charaka also there are references to some divine drugs. Charaka has described more than 50 recipes to be used by both the methods. Mostly the drugs mentioned in these chapters are useful for the general purpose of Rasaaayana i.e. to extend longevity with strength and vigour, whereas others are specific for different diseases like Kushtha (all skin diseases including leprosy and leucoderma), worm infections, mental weakness, piles, premature greying of hair, digestive troubles, odema, urinary diseases, asthma, respiratory troubles, scrofula, goitre, fila-

rasis, splenic diseases, anaemias, diseases caused by the vitiation of Vaata (neurological conditions), weakness of teeth, etc. These drugs are used as a single drug or in different combinations. Some are linctus preparations like Chyavanapraashha whereas others are medicated Ghritas. Potentiation of a single drug by repeatedly soaking it in its own juice and then drying is common. This is normally done for Aamalaki to prepare the famous Aamalaki-Rasaaayana. In some, like Pippali (Piper longum Linn.) and Bhallaataka (Semecarpus anacardium Linn.f.), the dose of the drugs is gradually increased daily and then again reduced gradually.

Apart from the vegetable drugs, some metals like gold and iron in the form of Bhasmas are also used. In diet, cow’s milk, juice of Munga-Daal (green gram), rice of Shaali and Shashtika varieties of paddy, honey and Ghrita are advised.

In this paper the Rasaaayana therapy of Ayurveda has been described and a first hand report of a unique performance of Kaayaakalpa (Rejuvenation) of Ayurveda is presented. The results are very encouraging. It may prove to be a new wonder therapy to the medical world.

References

