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"Rasayana: An Ayurvedic Approach to Healthy Aging in Women."

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Abstract:

Women experience unique physiological transitions throughout life, including menstruation, pregnancy, lactation, and menopause, which influence nutritional requirements and the aging process. Aging is associated with oxidative stress, inflammation, hormonal changes, sarcopenia, osteoporosis, and cognitive decline. Ayurveda emphasizes healthy aging (Jara Chikitsa) through *Rasayana*, which aims to enhance longevity, immunity, mental health, tissue nourishment, and quality of life. *Rasayana* plays a vital role in maintaining *Agni*, nourishing body tissues (Dhatus), and preventing age-related disorders. *Rasayana* drugs such as *Amla*, *Ashwagandha*, *Shatavari*, and *Guduchi* possess potential antioxidant, immunomodulatory, anti-inflammatory, and adaptogenic properties that may support healthy ageing. These actions may help reduce oxidative stress, maintain hormonal balance, preserve musculoskeletal health, and support cognitive and psychological well-being in women. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of *Rasayana* in addressing age-associated changes during menopause and promoting physical, mental, and social well-being. Integrating Ayurvedic *Rasayana Chikitsa* with balanced nutrition, lifestyle modifications, and preventive healthcare may provide a holistic approach to healthy aging in women. Further clinical research is required to establish the efficacy and safety of specific *Rasayana* formulations in promoting healthy aging among women.

Keywords:

Ageing, Ayurveda, Nutrition, *Rasayana*, Women.

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Introduction

Healthy aging has emerged as a global public health priority due to increasing life expectancy and the growing proportion of elderly women.[1] Women generally outlive men; however, they experience a higher burden of age-related health conditions, including osteoporosis, sarcopenia, cardiovascular diseases, cognitive decline, metabolic disorders, and menopausal symptoms.[2,3] Physiological transitions such as menarche, pregnancy, lactation, and menopause influence hormonal balance throughout a woman's life, making preventive healthcare essential for maintaining health and functional independence.

The World Health Organization defines healthy aging as the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age.[2] Ayurveda offers a comprehensive approach to healthy aging through the concept of Jara Chikitsa, one of the eight classical branches of Ayurveda, which emphasizes delaying age-related deterioration and preserving physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Among its therapeutic modalities, *Rasayana Chikitsa* occupies a central role. *Rasayana* aims to promote longevity (*Dirghayu*), enhance intellect (*Medha*), improve immunity (*Vyadhikshamatva*), nourish body tissues (*Dhatu Poshana*), and maintain strength (*Bala*), complexion (*Varna*), and vitality (*Ojas*). Classical texts describe *Rasayana* not merely as drug therapy but as a holistic regimen that incorporates appropriate lifestyle (*Vihara*), ethical conduct (*Achara Rasayana*), rejuvenative therapies, and mental well-being.[4,5,6]

Rasayana herbs such as *Amalaki, Guduchi, Ashwagandha, Shatavari, and Haritaki* have been traditionally used to counter age-related degeneration and are increasingly being investigated for their antioxidant, adaptogenic, immunomodulatory, anti-inflammatory, and neuroprotective properties.[7] These mechanisms may contribute to cellular protection, stress regulation, immune function, cognitive health, and maintenance of physical strength in ageing women. In particular, *Rasayana* therapy may offer potential benefits during menopause and postmenopausal ageing by supporting overall well-being and addressing age-associated physiological changes. However, the clinical effectiveness of individual *Rasayana* formulations requires further scientific investigation.[8]

The integration of *Rasayana* therapy with healthy lifestyle practices such as *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya, yoga*, adequate sleep, stress management, and preventive healthcare offers a multidimensional strategy for promoting healthy aging among women. Although contemporary research has explored the pharmacological actions of individual *Rasayana* herbs, comprehensive reviews focusing on their role in women's healthy aging remain limited. Therefore, synthesizing classical Ayurvedic concepts with current scientific evidence may provide valuable insights for developing holistic, preventive, and evidence-informed strategies to improve the health, quality of life, and functional capacity of aging women.[9]

Objectives:

- To review the concept of healthy aging in women from Ayurvedic and modern perspectives.
- To explore the role of *Rasayana* in delaying age-related physiological decline.

Materials & Methods:

Classical Ayurvedic texts (*Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya*), commentaries, and modern scientific literature were reviewed. Contemporary data were referred from NFHS, WHO reports, and recent research publications.

Concept Of *Rasayana*

The word *Rasayana* (*rasa+ayana*) refers to nutrition and its transportation in the body. The *Rasayana* therapy enhance the qualities of *rasa*, enriches it with nutrients so one can attains longevity, memory, intelligence, freedom from disorder, youthfulness, excellence of lustre, complexion and voice, optimum development of physique and sense organs, mastery over phonetics and brilliance. Taking *Rasayana* is helpful to

increase the immunity of the person to keep him away from disease. The concept of *Rasayana* interested us as the claims for this form of therapy are far reaching.[10] In the words of Charaka, "one obtains longevity, regains youth, gets a sharp memory and intellect and freedom from diseases, gets a lustrous complexion and strength of a horse".[10]

In Ayurveda, *Rasayana Chikitsa* aims to rejuvenate tissues, support digestion (*Agni*), and improve vitality (*Ojas*), thus playing a preventive and curative role.

Classification Of Rasayana

Rasayana is divided in two types on the basis of needs. First is *Kamya Rasayana* which is promoters of normal health. They boost body energy levels, immunity and general health. *Pranakamya, Medhakamya*, and *Srikamya* are the examples of *Kamya Rasayana*, which are promoters of vitality and longevity, intelligence and complexion respectively. Second type of *Rasayana* is *Naimittika Rasayana*, which help to fight against a specific disease. *Kuti Praveshika Rasayana* and *Vatatapica Rasayana* are the two types of *Rasayana* on the basis of place of therapy. Indoor *Rasayana* therapy is including in Kuti *Praveshika Rasayana* where *Vatatapika Rasayana* is outdoor *Rasayana* therapy. *Rasayana* can also classified three types on the basis of diet and life styles. These are *Aushadha Rasayana* which includes drug based *Rasayana, Achara Rasayana* are based on lifestyle and dietary based *Rasayana* are included in *Ahara Rasayana*.[11,12]

Mechanism Of Action of *Rasayanas* In Anti-Ageing Among Women

Rasayana therapy, a specialized branch of Ayurveda, promotes healthy ageing by enhancing tissue nourishment (*Dhatu Poshan*), supporting immunity (*Vyadhikshamatva*), improving vitality, and maintaining physiological balance. In women, *Rasayana* plays a potential role in addressing age-related changes associated with menopause, oxidative stress, hormonal fluctuations, and degeneration of body tissues. Its anti-ageing effects can be explained through both traditional Ayurvedic principles and modern pharmacological mechanisms.[13]

Antioxidant Action: *Rasayana* herbs such as Amla (Emblica officinalis), *Guduchi* (Tinospora cordifolia), and *Ashwagandha* (Withania somnifera) contain bioactive compounds with antioxidant properties. These compounds may help neutralize reactive oxygen species (ROS), reduce oxidative damage to cellular components, and support endogenous antioxidant defense mechanisms. Oxidative stress is associated with cellular ageing, inflammation, and tissue degeneration. Therefore, the antioxidant potential of *Rasayana* may contribute to maintaining cellular integrity and promoting healthy ageing in women.[14]

Anti-Inflammatory and Immunomodulatory Action: Ageing is associated with chronic low-grade inflammation, commonly referred to as inflammaging, which may contribute to various age-related disorders. *Rasayana* drugs are traditionally considered supportive of Ojas and *Vyadhikshamatva*. Certain herbs may influence inflammatory mediators and immune responses, potentially helping to maintain physiological homeostasis. *Guduchi* and Ashwagandha have been investigated for their immunomodulatory and anti-inflammatory properties. However, clinical effects depend on the specific formulation, dosage, and individual patient factors.[15]

Hormonal and Menopausal Support: Women experience significant hormonal changes during perimenopause and menopause, particularly a decline in estrogen levels. These changes may contribute to vasomotor symptoms, sleep disturbances, bone loss, and changes in mood. Certain *Rasayana* herbs, including *Shatavari* (Asparagus Racemosus), have been studied for their potential effects on female reproductive health and menopausal symptoms. Their phytoconstituents may interact with hormonal and cellular signalling pathways. Nevertheless, evidence for estrogenic effects and clinical menopausal benefits remains formulation-specific, and *Rasayana* should not be considered equivalent to hormone replacement therapy.[16]

Neuroprotective and Cognitive Effects: Medhya *Rasayana* drugs, such as *Brahmi* (Bacopa monnieri), are traditionally used to promote memory, intellect, and mental well-being. Modern research has investigated their antioxidant, neuroprotective, and cognitive effects, including possible influences on neuronal signalling and synaptic function. These properties may support cognitive health and psychological well-being during ageing. However, the extent of these effects in ageing women requires further clinical investigation.[17]

Musculoskeletal Protection and Dhatu Nourishment: Ageing in women, especially after menopause, is associated with increased risk of osteoporosis, muscle loss, and reduced physical function. According to Ayurveda, *Rasayana* promotes nourishment and maintenance of body tissues, including *Mamsa Dhatu* (muscle tissue) and *Asthi Dhatu* (bone tissue). From a modern perspective, certain *Rasayana* ingredients are being studied for their effects on inflammation, muscle function, and bone-related metabolic pathways. Adequate nutrition, weight-bearing exercise, and appropriate medical care remain essential for maintaining musculoskeletal health.

Stress-Modulating and Adaptogenic Action: Chronic stress can negatively affect sleep, mental health, and overall physiological functioning. Ashwagandha and other traditionally used *Rasayana* herbs have been investigated for their potential adaptogenic effects, including modulation of stress-related responses and perceived stress. Through possible effects on the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, these herbs may contribute to stress management and improved well-being. The evidence varies according to the preparation and clinical population studied.[18,19]

Discussion

Rasayana drugs such as *Amalaki, Guduchi, Ashwagandha, Shatavari, and Haritaki* possess antioxidant, adaptogenic, immunomodulatory, and rejuvenating properties that may help reduce oxidative stress and improve vitality. A balanced diet rich in proteins, calcium, iron, vitamin D, antioxidants, healthy fats, and micronutrients supports musculoskeletal health, cardiovascular function, cognitive performance, and hormonal balance.[20] Ayurveda further recommends individualized dietary practices based on constitution (*Prakriti*), digestive capacity (*Agni*), seasonal regimen (*Ritucharya*), and daily routine (*Dinacharya*). The integration of *Rasayana* therapy, wholesome nutrition, and healthy lifestyle practices may enhance physical, mental, and social well-being while reducing the burden of age-related diseases.[21]

Conclusion

Rasayana therapy may play a significant role in promoting healthy ageing among women through its multifaceted effects on physiological, psychological, and functional well-being. According to Ayurveda, *Rasayana* is a specialized therapeutic approach aimed at maintaining health, improving longevity, enhancing immunity, nourishing body tissues, and delaying the degenerative changes associated with ageing. The principles of *Dhatu Poshan* (nourishment of body tissues), *Ojas* (vital essence responsible for strength and vitality), *Agni* (metabolic and digestive capacity), and *Vyadhikshamatva* (disease resistance) provide a comprehensive traditional framework for understanding the potential role of *Rasayana* in healthy ageing.

Women undergo several physiological and hormonal transitions throughout their lifespan, including menstruation, pregnancy, lactation, perimenopause, and menopause. These transitions may influence nutritional status, bone health, metabolic functions, immunity, mental well-being, and overall quality of life. During the ageing process, women are particularly susceptible to conditions such as osteoporosis, sarcopenia, cardiovascular disorders, metabolic disturbances, cognitive decline, sleep disturbances, and menopausal symptoms. In this context, *Rasayana* therapy may offer a supportive approach to maintaining health

and reducing the impact of age-related physiological changes.

From the perspective of modern biomedical science, the potential benefits of *Rasayana* herbs and formulations may be associated with multiple biological activities, including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, immunomodulatory, adaptogenic, neuroprotective, and tissue-supportive properties. Their antioxidant potential may help counteract oxidative stress and cellular damage, while anti-inflammatory actions may contribute to maintaining tissue function. Immunomodulatory effects may support immune homeostasis, and neuroprotective activities may help preserve cognitive functions. Furthermore, adaptogenic properties may assist the body in maintaining physiological balance during stress and hormonal transitions. However, these mechanisms vary among individual herbs and formulations and require further scientific validation.

Several classical *Rasayana* drugs, such as *Amalaki* (Emblica officinalis), *Guduchi* (Tinospora cordifolia), *Ashwagandha* (Withania somnifera), *Shatavari* (Asparagus racemosus), and *Haritaki* (Terminalia chebula), have been explored for their potential health-promoting properties. Their traditional applications, together with emerging pharmacological evidence, suggest possible roles in supporting immunity, metabolic health, stress adaptation, tissue nourishment, and overall vitality. Nevertheless, their effects should not be generalized, as the therapeutic actions, safety profiles, and clinical outcomes may differ according to the individual drug, formulation, dosage, duration, and health status of the woman.

The integration of *Rasayana* therapy with appropriate dietary practices, regular physical activity, *Yoga, Pranayama*, adequate sleep, stress management, and routine preventive healthcare may provide a holistic approach to healthy ageing. Such an integrative approach is consistent with the Ayurvedic emphasis on maintaining equilibrium of *Dosha, Dhatu, Agni*, and *Ojas*, while also addressing the changing health requirements of women at different stages of life.

Thus, *Rasayana* therapy represents a promising traditional approach that may contribute to healthy ageing, preservation of functional capacity, and improvement in the quality of life among women. However, further well-designed clinical trials involving diverse age groups and different stages of women's reproductive and post-reproductive life are essential to establish its efficacy, safety, optimal dosage, long-term benefits, and formulation-specific mechanisms of action. Evidence-based integration of *Rasayana* into preventive and promotive healthcare may offer valuable opportunities for improving women's health and well-being throughout the ageing process.

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