

Introduction to *Rasāyana* in *Carakasamhitā* and *Suśrutasamhitā*

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This paper presents selected passages on *rasāyana* topic from classical Āyurveda literature, namely *Carakasamhitā* and *Suśrutasamhitā*. Āyurveda, literally 'the knowledge for longevity', with its branch *rasāyana*,¹ 'rejuvenation therapy', became one of the most popular system of medical teachings around the globe. Especially, in the connection with *rasāyana*, the *āyurvedic* products for anti-aging and longevity can be found in various shops.²

Carakasamhitā, 'Compendium of Caraka', is dated around first century CE (Wujastyk 2015:56). The Compendium is divided into eight sections: *Sūtrasthāna*, *Nidānasthāna*, *Vimānasthāna*, *Śārīrasthāna*, *Indriyasthāna*, *Cikitsāsthāna*, *Kalpasthāna* and *Siddhisthāna*. The subject on *rasāyana* is treated in the *Cikitsāsthāna*. *Suśrutasamhitā* is dated around 3rd century CE (Wujastyk, 2015:61). Here, *Rasāyana* is treated in four sections, *Cikitsāsthāna* 27-30. (Wujastyk, 2015:61). However, there are some differences between these texts on the presentation of *rasāyana* treatment.³

In this paper, I will present a brief introduction on *rasāyana* presented in both texts, namely *Carakasamhitā* 6.1.1-12 and *Suśrutasamhitā* 4.27.1-6.

Carakasamhitā Cikitsāsthāna 6.1.1-12:

prathamo 'dhyāyaḥ|

rasāyanādhyāye prathamah pādah |

First chapter:

The first quarter in the chapter is on rejuvenation therapy.

athāto 'bhayāmalakīyaṃ rasāyanapādaṃ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ ||1||

iti ha smāha bhagavān ātreyaḥ ||2||

Hence, now, we will proclaim the quarter on rejuvenation therapy, which is dedicated to *abhayā*⁴ and *amla*.⁵

So, thus said the venerable Ātreya.

cikitsitaṃ vyādhiharam pathyaṃ sādhanam auśadham |

prāyaścittaṃ praśamanam prakṛtisthāpanam hitam ||3||

vidyād bheṣajanāmāni, bheṣajaṃ dvididham ca tat|

svasthasyorjaskaram kiñjit kiñcid ārtasya roganut ||4||

Medical treatment (*cikitsita*), elimination of diseases (*vyādhihara*), salutary (*pathya*), healing (*sādhana*), medicinal herb (*auśadha*), atonement (*prāyaścitta*), pacification (*praśamana*), establishing of the natural condition (*prakṛtisthāpana*)[and]the wholesome (*hita*),[these] should be known as a designation for the medicine. And the medicine is twofold, that which promotes strength in the healthy one and that which removes the disease for the sick one.

abheṣajaṃ ca dvididham bhādhanam sānubādhanam|

svasthasyorjaskaram yattu tadvr̥ṣyaṃ tadrasāyanam ||5||

prāyaḥ, prāyeṇa rogāṇām dviṭīyam praśame matam |

prāyaḥ śabdo viśeṣārtho hyubhayam hyubhayārthakṛt ||6||

And that what is not curative is twofold, [directly] causing pain and that what is followed by pain.

But that which promotes the strength in the healthy one, that is mostly stimulating and rejuvenating. The second kind, mostly, is considered in the pacification of diseases. The word 'mostly' has the sense of the specification, because both [kinds of medicine] promote both objectives.

dirgham āyuh smṛtiṃ medhām ārogyaṃ taruṇaṃ vayah|

prabhāvarṇasvaraudārye dehendriyabalaṃ param ||7||

vāksiddhiṃ praṇatiṃ kāntiṃ labhate nā rasāyanāt |

lābhopāyo hi śastānāṃ rasādīnāṃ rasāyanam ||8||

Long life, memory, intellect, health, youthfulness, luster, [nice] skin tone, voice and magnificence, the highest strength of the body and senses, the perfection of the speech, respect, loveliness, this is surely achieved from the rejuvenation therapy. For the means to obtain excellent body elements, such as chyle, etc. is the rejuvenation therapy.

According to Caraka, we can see that *rasāyana* is used not only for the people with diseases, but also for promoting health in the healthy person. Most of the valuable things that one can achieve through *rasāyana* are mentioned above, in stanza seven and eight. In the case of *vāksiddhi*, 'the perfection of the speech', Wujastyk refers to *Cakrapaṇidatta's* commentary from which one can understand that *vāksiddhi* does not refer only to an ordinary person with oratorical skills, but it is also a kind of special power, namely “whatever one says, it arises inevitably⁶” (Wujastyk 2015:57). Further on, in stanza eight, the explanation of *rasāyana* as obtainment of excellent body elements such as chyle, and so on refers to *rasa* (chyle) as the first item in the list of several others. Maas refers to Aruṇadatta who explains *ādi*, 'etc' or 'and so on' as an enumeration of the seven bodily elements, such as *rasa* (chyle), *rakta* (blood), *māṃsa* (flesh), *meda* (fat), *asthi* (bones), *majjā* (marrow) and *śukra* (semen) (Maas, 2017:75).

Suśrutasaṃhita 4.27 1-6:

athātaḥ sarvopaghātaśamanīyaṃ rasāyanam vyākhyāsyāmaḥ ||
yathovāca bhagavān dhanvantariḥ||

Hence, now, we will proclaim the rejuvenation therapy, which consist in eliminating all diseases.

As follows, the venerable Dhanvantari said.

pūrve vayasi madhye vā manuṣyasya rasāyanam |
prayuñjīta bhiṣak prājñāḥ snigdhaśuddhataṅḥ sadā ||3||

A knowledgeable physician should apply the rejuvenation therapy for a man, who has [his] body cleaned and oiled, in [his] early or middle age.

nāvisuddhaśarīrasya yukto rāsāyano vidhiḥ |
na bhāti vāsasi kliṣṭe raṅgayoga ivāhitāḥ ||4||

Regulation related to rejuvenation therapy is not suitable for the body that is not cleaned, just like the inconvenient application of a color on a dirty cloth does not shine.

śarīrasyopaghātā ye doṣajā mānasās tathā |
upadiṣṭāḥ pradeśeṣu teṣāṃ vakṣyāmi vāraṇam ||5||

I will proclaim the obstruction of diseases of the body, which arise from the disorder [of the three humours of the body] or the mental ones, that are specified in [their] places.

śītodakam payāḥ kṣaudram sarpirityekaśo dviśaḥ |
triśaḥ samastamathavā prāk pītam sthāpayedvayaḥ ||6||

Cold water, milk, honey, clarified butter, individually, in pairs, in three, all together, inhibit the aging process drunk before [each meal].

Suśruta starts with the very simple recipe in the sixth stanza. Wujastyk refers to the same stanza to show the difference between Caraka and Suśruta recipes. Suśruta, in contrast to Caraka, has most recipes very simple, consisting of one of the main ingredients (Wujastyk, 2015:61). Further Suśruta enumerates twenty – four different kinds of soma plants explaining the place where they can be found, their characteristic and effectiveness.

In this paper I have referred only to the few introducing stanzas of Suśruta from the *Cikitsāsthāna* 27 section. In which, according to Suśruta, as we can see above, *rasāyana* therapy refers to the elimination of all diseases (*sarvopaghātāśamanīya*). In this case, we do not have reference for the promoting of the strength in the healthy person as it is explained in Caraka. Moreover, at the beginning of the other sections, 4.28 Suśruta describes another kind of *rasāyana* treatment, that is based on the longing for the intelligence and long life (*medhāyuskāmanīya*). In 4.29 *rasāyana* is based on warding off natural diseases (*svabhāvvyādhipratiśedhanīya*), or as Wujastyk translates it “treatments for preventing natural afflictions or vulnerabilities, i.e. thirst, hunger and tiredness” (Wujastyk, 2015:61).

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1 In this paper, I will use 'rejuvenation therapy' as a translation of *rasāyana*. Hence, in the paper “On the Meaning of *Rasāyana* in Classical Yoga and *Āyurveda*”, written by Maas, we can read about the meaning of *rasāyana* in *Āyurveda*. He presents an etymological explanation of the word *rasāyana* found in *Carakasamhita*, namely a way or means to obtain a *rasa* ('chyle'), etc. For further examples and explanations see Philipp A. Maas 2017.

2 One of the major products is *cyavanaprāśa*. For the further examples see Wujastyk 2015.

3 See Wujastyk 2015.

4 *abhayā* is a synonym for *aharītakī* plant, *terminalia chebula*.

5 *amla*, *āmalaka* or *āmalakī*, *Phyllanthus emblica*. Maas explains that this plant is usually identified with the Indian gooseberry, *Embllica officinalis* (Maas, 2017:72).

6 *vāksiddhiḥ yad ucyate tad avasīyaṃ bhavātīti.*

