



# VIRTUE AS MEDICINE: ACHARA RASAYANA FOR A PEACEFUL SOCIETY

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## ABSTRACT

*Ayurveda*, through the concept of *Achara Rasayana* (code of virtuous conduct), offers a holistic framework to strengthen physical, mental, social, and spiritual health. The pace of crime in modern times is rapidly increasing, making effective control a vital necessity for society. The principles of *Ayurveda*, particularly the concept of *Achara Rasayana*, can provide meaningful guidance in this context. Just as impure food contaminates the body, negative thoughts and actions are corrupting the mentality of today's society, leading to rising cases of murder, kidnapping, sexual harassment, dowry deaths, child abuse, dacoity, cheating, gambling, human trafficking, and cybercrime. Recent data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that crimes against women have risen by about 10% compared to the previous year, with overall IPC and Special and Local Laws (SLL) crimes recording a 7% increase since 2013. Such developments pose serious threats to social well-being. *Achara Rasayana*, also known as *Sadvritta*, offers a way to address these challenges by promoting virtuous conduct, self-discipline, and ethical living. By properly channelling the skills and energy of the younger generation, India can build a stronger and more harmonious future. The teachings of *Achara Rasayana* not only encourage moral behaviour necessary for a healthy society but also foster mental calmness and spiritual growth. Ultimately, it strengthens the physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions of health, making it a holistic tool for building a balanced and crime-free society. Thus, *Achara Rasayana* emerges as a timeless tool for crime prevention and societal healing, presenting virtue itself as a form of medicine for building a peaceful and sustainable society.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda*, *Achara Rasayana*, *Sadvritta*, NCRB, Rejuvenation, Rehabilitation

## INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda* introduces the valuable concept of *Achara Rasayana*, which emphasizes the ethical codes of conduct that guide how an individual should live, what should be practiced, and what should be avoided. It forms an essential part of preventive medicine in *Ayurveda*. The foundation of this concept lies in cultivating a healthy mind with strong self-control. <sup>(1)</sup> Stress, a common challenge for every individual, often arises from one's behaviour and interactions with people or situations. *Ayurveda* addresses all dimensions of life to ensure optimal health-covering physiological, psychological, social, behavioural, dietary, and spiritual aspects. <sup>(2)</sup> By practicing *Achara Rasayana*, one can achieve better control over the mind, leading to balanced living and overall well-being. <sup>(1)</sup>

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To emphasize the significance of virtuous behaviour (*Acharya Rasayana*) and to examine its influence on the body's mechanisms such as hormonal balance, biochemical processes, and the functioning of *Doshas* and *Dhatus* etc.<sup>(3)</sup>

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study has been conducted through an extensive literature search and critical review of the available evidence. Major medical research databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and other national repositories were explored. Keywords used for the search included 'Achara Rasayana,' 'good conduct,' 'good behaviour,' 'rehabilitation,' and 'Sadvritha.' Additionally, a manual search of reference lists from the retrieved articles was performed to identify further relevant studies<sup>(4)</sup>.

## OBSERVATION AND RESULT

According to *Acharya Charaka*, described in *Chikitsa Sthana*, the rejuvenating effects of good conduct (*Acharya Rasayana*) can be attained by those who live a disciplined and virtuous life.<sup>(6)</sup> Such individuals are truthful, free from anger, abstain from alcohol and excessive indulgence in sex, avoid violence (*Hinsa*) and overexertion, remain calm and pleasant in speech, practice *Japa* (recitation of mantras), and maintain cleanliness.<sup>(6)(11)</sup> They embody steadiness (*Dhairya*), regularly engage in charity and penance (*Tapas*), offer prayers to deities, cows, *Brahmanas*, teachers, elders, and preceptors, and refrain from cruel or barbarous actions.<sup>(6)</sup> Compassion, regulated sleep and wake cycles, consumption of wholesome foods such as milk and ghee, awareness of appropriate practices according to place and time, rational thinking, humility, noble conduct, open-mindedness, love for spiritual knowledge, well-functioning senses, reverence for seniors, faith in God and *Vedic* knowledge (*Astikya*), self-control, and regular study of scriptures-all these qualities strengthen the impact of rejuvenation therapy<sup>(6)(9)(10)</sup>. When such individuals practice *Rasayana*, they derive its fullest psychological, social, behavioural, spiritual, personal, and nutritional benefits.<sup>(6)</sup>

A person with a pure mind is naturally self-controlled, and this self-control is the most essential quality for obtaining the best results from rejuvenation therapy.<sup>(6)</sup> Since antiquity, human beings have aspired to live long, healthy, and fulfilling lives. *Ayurveda*, the "science of life," provides a comprehensive path to achieve this goal, and *Rasayana* is considered its most effective means<sup>(5)</sup>.

*Rasayana* is a distinct branch of *Ashtanga Ayurveda*, highlighting its importance in both the preservation of health and the treatment of disease. Classical *Ayurvedic* texts, including the *Brihatrayi* and *Laghutrayi*, have devoted separate chapters to the study of *Rasayana*<sup>(5)</sup>, offering detailed definitions and explanations. Commentators such as *Acharya Chakrapanidatta*, *Gangadhara*, *Yogindranath Sen*, *Dalhana*, and *Arundatta* have further expanded its understanding, presenting different aspects and interpretations<sup>(5)(11)</sup>.

The fundamental purpose of *Ayurveda* is the maintenance of health (*Swasthya Rakshana*) and the treatment of disease (*Atura Chikitsa*). Practical application of *Rasayana* supports both objectives<sup>(3)</sup>, with its various classifications allowing for tailored use across age groups and conditions. As life progresses, natural wear and degeneration occur; replenishment through *Rasayana* helps restore balance and vitality<sup>(6)</sup>. Furthermore, *Rasayana* not only nourishes the body but also elevates the *Sattva Guna* (purity and clarity) of the mind, which can only be fully realized when practiced alongside *Acharya Rasayana*<sup>(6)</sup>.

With the progress of modern science, these ancient concepts are now being validated through contemporary methods, reinforcing *Rasayana* as a proven and effective rejuvenator. Its role is equally significant in disease management, where it corrects *Dhatu Vaishamyam* (imbalance of bodily tissues) and restores *Dhatu Samya*<sup>(6)</sup> (equilibrium).

In this light, it can rightly be said that *Rasayana* is a gift of *Ayurveda* to humanity-a timeless therapeutic tool for health preservation, disease management, mental upliftment, and spiritual progress.

### Concept of *Acharya Rasayana* (Behavioral medicine)

*Acharya Rasayana* is a distinctive principle in *Ayurveda* that emphasizes moral, ethical, and virtuous conduct. It encompasses truthfulness, non-violence, personal and social cleanliness, mental discipline, devotion, compassion, and a yogic way of life<sup>(6)</sup>. Such practices are believed to rejuvenate both the body and mind. Remarkably, an individual who follows these behavioural codes gains the full benefits of *Rasayana* therapy even without consuming physical formulations<sup>(6)(11)</sup>, although it can also be practiced alongside material-

based *Rasayana* remedies. The essence of *Achara Rasayana* lies in transforming one's behaviour to prevent disease, restore balance, and promote overall well-being.

Individuals who remain truthful and calm, abstain from alcohol and excessive indulgence in sex, avoid violence (*Hinsa*) and overexertion, speak kindly, maintain cleanliness, practice *Japa* (recitation), and lead a stable and steady life are considered ideal practitioners. Regular engagement in charity and penance (*Tapas*), prayers to deities, *Guru*<sup>(9)</sup> (teachers), and elders, compassion, adherence to proper sleep-wake cycles, consumption of wholesome foods like milk and *Ghee*, awareness of appropriate practices according to place and time, rational thinking, humility, open-mindedness, love for spiritual knowledge, proper functioning of sense organs, reverence for seniors, faith in God and the *Vedas* (*Astikya*), self-control, and regular study of scriptures are qualities that maximize the effects of rejuvenation therapy.

According to the *Charaka Samhita*, those endowed with these virtues experience the highest benefits of *Rasayana*. Thus, the rejuvenating power of good conduct is recognized as a vital aspect of *Ayurvedic* medicine<sup>(6)</sup>, bridging behavioural discipline with holistic health.

### Traditional Behavioral *Rasayanas*:

***Sadvṛttam Anuṣṭheyam*** -One should practice *Sadvṛtta* (righteous conduct and discipline) as a form of *Nitya Rasayana*, a daily rejuvenative therapy that does not require material substances. The classical instruction "*Satyavadinam akrodham*.<sup>(11)</sup>" highlights the importance of moral and ethical living as the true elixir of life.

As per *Acharya Charaka*

सत्यवादिनमक्रोधं निवृत्तं मद्यमैथुनात्।  
अहिंसकमनायासं प्रशान्तं प्रियवादिनम्॥३०॥  
जपशौचपरं धीरं दाननित्यं तपस्विनम्।  
देवगोब्राह्मणाचार्यगुरुवृद्धार्चने रतम्॥३१॥  
आनृशंस्यपरं नित्यं नित्यं करुणवेदिनम्।  
समजागरणस्वप्नं नित्यं क्षीरघृताशिनम्॥३२॥  
देशकालप्रमाणज्ञं युक्तिज्ञमनहङ्कृतम्।  
शस्ताचारमसङ्कीर्णमध्यात्मप्रवणेन्द्रियम्॥३३॥  
उपासितारं वृद्धानामास्तिकानां जितात्मनाम्।  
धर्मशास्त्रपरं विद्यान्नरं नित्यरसायनम्॥३४॥  
गुणैरेतैः समुदितैः प्रयुङ्क्ते यो रसायनम्।  
रसायनगुणान् सर्वान् यथोक्तान् स समश्नुते॥३५॥  
(इत्याचाररसायनम्)।

Key principles of Behavioural *Rasayana* include:

- Practicing truthfulness
- Maintaining freedom from anger
- Avoiding intoxication and alcohol
- Following nonviolence in thought, word, and deed
- Cultivating calmness and serenity
- Using gentle and sweet speech
- Remaining engaged in meditation and self-reflection

- Observing cleanliness (internal and external)
- Exercising perseverance and patience
- Practicing charity and generosity
- Living a religious and spiritually disciplined life
- Showing respect to teachers, parents, and elders
- Nurturing love, kindness, and compassion
- Maintaining balance in sleep and wakefulness
- Regular use of ghee for nourishment
- Being mindful of time, place, and situation
- Exercising control over the senses
- Keeping the company of elders and the wise
- Fostering a positive and optimistic attitude
- Developing self-control and discipline
- Devotion to *Vedic* scriptures and spiritual wisdom

## DISCUSSION

*Achara Rasayana*, described as an *Adravyabhuta Rasayana*, represents a unique contribution of *Ayurveda* to the science of rejuvenation<sup>(6)</sup>. Unlike material *Rasayanas*, it emphasizes ethical conduct, emotional regulation, and social responsibility as determinants of health. This approach highlights the holistic perspective of *Ayurveda*, wherein health is seen as the balanced integration of body, mind, and society.

From the present understanding, *Achara Rasayana* may be discussed in three dimensions: improvement of personality, enhancement of social relationships, and promotion of physical health. By cultivating positive *Manasbhavas* such as cheerfulness, forgiveness, and compassion, it enhances psycho-neuro-immunological responses<sup>(8)</sup>. Modern research supports this view, as bidirectional communication between the central nervous system and the immune system is well established. Sleep physiology, circadian rhythm, and the stress response play crucial roles in immune competence, providing a scientific rationale for *Ayurvedic* emphasis on balanced behaviour and routine.

Emotional states exert a profound effect on health. Anger and hostility, for instance, are associated with adverse cardiovascular outcomes, including coronary heart disease and atrial fibrillation. Classical texts also highlight the destructive role of untruthfulness, disrespect to teachers, sinful actions, and contradictory diets in the causation of diseases such as *Kilasa*. Similarly, depletion of *Shukra* and *Ojas* through jealousy, grief, fear, or indulgence results in *Vata* aggravation, manifesting in respiratory, gastrointestinal, and systemic disorders. These descriptions align with current evidence that psychosocial stress negatively influences endocrine and immune functions.

The inclusion of arts and spiritual practices within the framework of *Achara Rasayana* illustrates its psychosomatic orientation. Music (*Raga* therapy), visual arts, prayer, and meditation have been shown to stabilize emotions, improve quality of life, and reduce stress-related cardiovascular risk<sup>(7)</sup>. Listening to Vedic recitations, engaging in worship, and practicing transcendental meditation can be interpreted as interventions that enhance coherence between mind and body, supporting resilience against disease<sup>(8)</sup>. Lifestyle values emphasized in *Achara Rasayana*-such as *Satya* (truthfulness), *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Brahmacharya* (sexual discipline), respect for parents and teachers, and avoidance of intoxicants- are increasingly validated in modern scientific studies. These behaviours not only prevent lifestyle-related disorders but also cultivate social harmony and ethical responsibility. Nutritional aspects also play a role; the *Ayurvedic* classification of *Sattvik* and *Tamasik*<sup>(2)</sup> foods parallels current understanding of how diet influences mood, cognition, and immunity.

On a broader public health scale, adherence to *Achara Rasayana* offers preventive value. Studies demonstrate that nutritional interventions can reduce antisocial behaviour in prisons, and by extension, dietary and behavioural corrections may improve social conduct in the community. Even in conditions such as HIV/AIDS, adherence to principles of *Sadvṛitta* and *Achara Rasayana* can minimize the spread of infection

and improve quality of life, underscoring its relevance in communicable as well as non-communicable diseases.

Observationally, individuals who strongly follow the tenets of *Achara Rasayana* are reported to have better academic performance, improved physical and mental health, and stronger social networks. Moderate adherence yields variable results, while poor adherence is associated with weaker immunity, psychosomatic stress, and impaired social adjustment. Thus, the gradation of outcomes strongly supports the role of behaviour in shaping health trajectories.

The *Ayurvedic* caution regarding anger is particularly noteworthy. The *Bhagavad Gita* describes anger as “more powerful than fire,” and classical texts recognize its role in generating *Ama* and depleting *Ojas*. Forgiveness, on the other hand, is seen as a therapeutic counterforce. These perspectives are consistent with modern psychoneuroendocrinology, which links chronic anger and hostility with elevated cortisol and suppressed testosterone, both of which are detrimental to vitality.

In summary, *Achara Rasayana* represents an integrative model where behaviour, ethics, diet, and spirituality converge to create health. Its multidimensional action on personality, social life, and physical well-being reflects an advanced understanding of mind–body medicine. When critically examined alongside contemporary evidence, the principles of *Achara Rasayana* resonate with modern concepts of psycho-neuro-immunology, stress management, lifestyle medicine, and public health.

## CONCLUSION

*Achara Rasayana*, the *Ayurvedic* concept of lifestyle modification through ethical conduct and disciplined living, offers a cost-effective strategy to reduce the global burden of disease. Its clinical significance lies in promoting physical health, mental stability, and social harmony without dependence on material interventions. To strengthen its scientific validity, well-designed prospective cohort studies, free from publication bias, are essential. Furthermore, creating awareness among physicians, researchers, and health policy makers about the preventive and therapeutic potential of *Achara Rasayana* is vital. Integrating this timeless approach into modern health care could contribute substantially to holistic and sustainable disease management.

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