

# Homeostasis, Adaptation, and Resilience: Reinterpreting Rasayana Dravyas Through Contemporary Physiological and Molecular Sciences

Dr. Pooja Upat<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Archana Anilkumar Wahurwagh<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Sanket Satish Mohata<sup>3</sup>,  
Dr. Sneha Devidas Wakde<sup>4</sup>, Dr. Ganesh Hedao<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Dravyaguna vigyan, Dr. R. R. K. Ayurved College and Hospital, Turkhed, Tq. Murtizapur, Akola, Maharashtra, 444107, Email ID: [poojauprat19@gmail.com](mailto:poojauprat19@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Professor and HOD, Department of Dravyaguna vigyan, Dr. R. R. K. Ayurved College and Hospital, Turkhed, Tq. Murtizapur, Akola, Maharashtra, 444107, Email ID: [archanaw19@gmail.com](mailto:archanaw19@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Dravyaguna vigyan, Bhausaheb Mulak Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Nandanvan, Nagpur, Maharashtra, 440024, Email ID: [drsanketmohata@gmail.com](mailto:drsanketmohata@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Dravyaguna vigyan, Shri K R Pandav Ayurved College and Hospital, Nagpur, Maharashtra, 440034, Email ID : [snehawakde8@gmail.com](mailto:snehawakde8@gmail.com)

<sup>5</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Kriya Sharir, Bhausaheb Mulak Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Nandanvan, Nagpur, Maharashtra, 440024, Email ID: [hedaoodrganesh@gmail.com](mailto:hedaoodrganesh@gmail.com)

## Author for Correspondence:

**Dr. Pooja Upat**

Assistant Professor

Department of Dravyaguna Vigyan

Dr. R. R. K. Ayurved College and Hospital, Turkhed

Email ID: [poojauprat19@gmail.com](mailto:poojauprat19@gmail.com)

## Abstract

**Background:** The increasing global prevalence of lifestyle disorders, chronic stress, metabolic dysfunction, and age-associated diseases has highlighted the importance of maintaining physiological homeostasis and adaptive resilience. Homeostasis, traditionally defined as the maintenance of internal stability, has evolved into broader concepts such as allostasis and physiological resilience, which describe the body's dynamic ability to adapt to environmental, psychological, and metabolic stressors. Contemporary research suggests that disruption of these regulatory mechanisms contributes significantly to the pathogenesis of obesity, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, neurodegenerative disorders, and chronic inflammatory conditions.

**Objective:** To reinterpret the concept of Rasayana dravyas through the lens of contemporary physiological and molecular sciences, with special emphasis on homeostasis, adaptation, resilience, neuroendocrine regulation, immune modulation, oxidative stress control, and healthy aging.

**Methods:** A narrative evidence-based review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic literature and contemporary scientific databases including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Literature pertaining to homeostasis, allostasis, resilience biology, adaptogenic pharmacology, oxidative stress, neuroendocrine physiology, immunomodulation, and Rasayana dravyas was critically reviewed and synthesized.

**Results:** The review demonstrates that several Rasayana dravyas exhibit biological activities consistent with the principles of physiological adaptation and resilience. Experimental and clinical evidence indicates that classical Rasayana herbs such as Ashwagandha, Guduchi, Amalaki, Shatavari, and Yashtimadhu possess adaptogenic, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, immunomodulatory, neuroprotective, and cytoprotective properties. These effects influence multiple physiological systems including the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis, immune networks, mitochondrial function, inflammatory signaling pathways, and cellular stress responses. Such multi-target actions contribute to restoration of homeostatic balance and enhancement of physiological resilience under chronic stress conditions.

**Conclusion:** The traditional Rasayana concept demonstrates remarkable parallels with contemporary theories of homeostasis, allostasis, adaptation, and resilience. Modern physiological and molecular evidence supports the role of Rasayana dravyas as biological response modifiers capable of promoting systemic stability, stress adaptation, and healthy aging. Future investigations employing systems biology, network pharmacology, and precision medicine approaches may further elucidate the mechanistic foundations of Rasayana and facilitate its integration into evidence-based healthcare.

**Keywords:** Lifestyle Disorders; Rasayana; Homeostasis; Adaptation; Resilience

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## 1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed a marked increase in lifestyle-related disorders, chronic stress, metabolic dysfunction, accelerated aging, and immune-mediated diseases. Despite significant advances in biomedical sciences, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for nearly three-quarters of global deaths.[8] Sedentary lifestyles, sleep deprivation, nutritional imbalance, environmental pollution, occupational stress, and excessive digital exposure have contributed to disturbances in physiological regulatory mechanisms responsible for maintaining internal stability.[8,9]

The maintenance of a stable internal environment despite external fluctuations is known as **homeostasis**, a concept systematically elaborated by Walter Cannon.[2] Homeostasis involves coordinated interactions among the nervous, endocrine, immune, cardiovascular, and metabolic systems to regulate essential physiological variables such as temperature, blood glucose, pH, blood pressure, and immune function.[1,2]

Contemporary physiology recognizes that biological systems are dynamic and adaptive rather than static regulators. This understanding led to the concept of **allostasis**, defined as “stability through change,” which describes the body's ability to adapt to environmental and psychological challenges through predictive regulation.[3–5] However, prolonged activation of adaptive mechanisms may result in **allostatic load**, leading to neuroendocrine, metabolic, immune, and inflammatory dysregulation associated with obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, anxiety, depression, and premature aging.[3,6–10]

An extension of these concepts is **physiological resilience**, which refers to the capacity of biological

systems to resist disruption, recover from stress, and restore functional equilibrium.[3,4] At the molecular level, resilience is linked to mitochondrial function, oxidative stress regulation, immune competence, neuroplasticity, and cellular repair mechanisms.[10,11] Greater resilience is associated with improved health outcomes, successful aging, and enhanced stress tolerance.[10]

Within Ayurveda, **Rasayana** represents a specialized branch focused on promoting longevity, vitality, immunity, cognitive function, and resistance to disease.[13–15] Classical texts describe Rasayana as an approach that enhances tissue nourishment, biological strength, mental clarity, and healthy aging.[13–15] Although traditionally interpreted within Ayurvedic philosophical frameworks, advances in physiology, molecular biology, immunology, and pharmacology have enabled scientific exploration of Rasayana through contemporary biomedical perspectives.[18–20]

Emerging evidence suggests that Rasayana dravyas influence multiple physiological systems involved in adaptation and resilience, including regulation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, immune modulation, antioxidant defense, mitochondrial function, and neuroprotection.[19–29] The modern concept of **adaptogens**, substances that enhance stress tolerance while maintaining physiological equilibrium, provides a particularly relevant bridge between Rasayana and contemporary physiology.[19,20] Classical Rasayana herbs such as Ashwagandha, Guduchi, Amalaki, Shatavari, and Yashtimadhu have demonstrated adaptogenic, immunomodulatory, antioxidant, and cytoprotective activities in experimental and clinical studies.[21–29]

Recent advances in systems biology and network pharmacology further support the scientific relevance of Rasayana by demonstrating that many

herbal interventions exert multitarget effects across interconnected biological networks rather than acting on a single molecular pathway.[30–32] Such properties are especially valuable in addressing multifactorial disorders associated with chronic stress, inflammation, metabolic dysfunction, and aging.[30–32]

Therefore, the present review aims to reinterpret Rasayana dravyas through the interconnected concepts of homeostasis, allostasis, adaptation, and resilience. By integrating classical Ayurvedic knowledge with contemporary physiological and molecular evidence, this review seeks to explore the potential role of Rasayana in promoting systemic stability, healthy aging, and protection against modern lifestyle disorders.[1–32]

## 2. Concept of Homeostasis in Modern Physiology

Homeostasis refers to the maintenance of a relatively stable internal environment despite continuous internal and external fluctuations and represents a fundamental principle of human physiology.[1,2] Walter Cannon expanded Claude Bernard's concept of *milieu intérieur* and emphasized that survival depends upon dynamic equilibrium maintained through coordinated physiological regulation.[2]

Living organisms are constantly exposed to environmental and metabolic challenges such as temperature changes, nutritional variations, infections, psychological stress, and physical exertion. To maintain optimal cellular function, the body employs complex regulatory systems that continuously monitor physiological variables and initiate corrective responses whenever deviations occur.[1,2] Homeostasis is therefore a dynamic process maintained through interactions among the nervous, endocrine, immune, cardiovascular, respiratory, renal, and metabolic systems.[1]

### Components of Homeostatic Regulation

Modern physiology recognizes three essential components of homeostatic control:[1]

**1. Receptors (Sensors):** Detect changes in the internal environment, including thermoreceptors, baroreceptors, chemoreceptors, and osmoreceptors.

**2. Control Centers:** Primarily located in the central nervous and endocrine systems, these centers compare incoming information with physiological set points and coordinate corrective responses. Examples include the hypothalamus, brainstem autonomic centers, endocrine glands, and immune regulatory networks.[1]

**3. Effectors:** Execute corrective actions to restore equilibrium and include sweat glands, skeletal muscles, blood vessels, kidneys, and endocrine organs.[1]

Together, these components form integrated feedback networks that preserve physiological stability.

### Mechanisms of Homeostatic Control

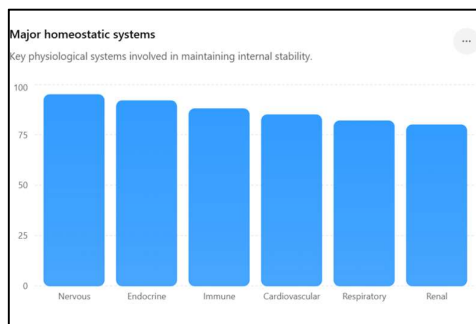
**Negative feedback** is the principal mechanism of homeostatic regulation, whereby deviations from normal values trigger responses that restore equilibrium. Examples include regulation of blood glucose, blood pressure, body temperature, and acid–base balance.[1]

**Positive feedback** amplifies physiological responses until a specific endpoint is achieved. Examples include blood clotting, childbirth, and the lactation reflex.[1]

**Table 1. Major Homeostatic Systems in Human Physiology**

Physiological System	Regulated Variable	Major Regulatory Mechanism
Nervous System	Neural activity	Neurotransmitter regulation
Endocrine System	Hormonal balance	Hormonal feedback loops
Cardiovascular System	Blood pressure	Baroreceptor reflex
Respiratory System	Oxygen and carbon dioxide levels	Chemoreceptor regulation
Renal System	Fluid and electrolyte balance	Renin–Angiotensin–Aldosterone System (RAAS)
Immune System	Immune surveillance and inflammatory balance	Cytokine regulation
Metabolic System	Glucose and energy balance	Insulin–glucagon axis

**Source:** Adapted from Hall JE. *Guyton and Hall Textbook of Medical Physiology*. 14th ed. Philadelphia: Elsevier; 2021.[1] and Cannon WB. *The Wisdom of the Body*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company; 1932.[2]



### Major Components of Homeostasis

#### Neuroendocrine Basis of Homeostasis

The neuroendocrine system plays a central role in maintaining homeostasis.[1,6] The hypothalamus integrates neural and endocrine signals and regulates stress responses, metabolism, growth, reproduction, thermoregulation, and water balance. The hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis is particularly important during stress.[6,7]

Activation of the HPA axis involves:

1. Release of corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH)
2. Secretion of adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH)
3. Production of cortisol by the adrenal cortex

While short-term activation promotes adaptation and survival, chronic activation contributes to allostatic overload and disease development.[6,7]

#### Immune Homeostasis

The immune system maintains physiological equilibrium by balancing pro-inflammatory and anti-inflammatory responses while ensuring effective defense against pathogens.[10] Disruption of immune homeostasis contributes to autoimmune disorders, chronic inflammatory diseases, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, and neurodegenerative disorders.[10] Several Rasayana dravyas have demonstrated immunomodulatory effects through regulation of cytokine networks and immune cell function.[24–26]

#### Oxidative Stress and Cellular Homeostasis

Cellular homeostasis depends upon a balance between oxidant production and antioxidant defense mechanisms.[27–29] Excessive generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) results in oxidative stress, causing DNA damage, protein oxidation, lipid peroxidation, mitochondrial dysfunction, and accelerated aging.[27] Oxidative stress is a major contributor to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular

diseases, cancer, and neurodegenerative disorders.[27–29]

### Homeostasis and Modern Lifestyle Disorders

Modern lifestyles increasingly disrupt homeostatic regulation through chronic stress, sedentary behavior, sleep deprivation, unhealthy diets, environmental toxins, excessive screen exposure, and social isolation.[8–10] Persistent exposure to these stressors increases physiological burden and contributes to chronic disease development. Consequently, interventions that restore homeostasis and enhance resilience are becoming increasingly important in preventive medicine.

#### Physiological Relevance to Rasayana

The classical objectives of Rasayana including longevity, vitality, cognitive enhancement, immunity, and disease resistance closely parallel modern goals of maintaining physiological homeostasis.[13–15] From a contemporary perspective, Rasayana may enhance adaptive capacity, reduce oxidative stress, improve immune regulation, support neuroendocrine balance, preserve cellular function, and promote healthy aging.[18–20] These correlations provide a scientific basis for interpreting Rasayana through the framework of modern homeostatic regulation.

### 3. Adaptation, Allostasis and Physiological Resilience

While homeostasis remains fundamental to physiological regulation, living organisms are not passive systems that merely maintain internal stability. Instead, they continuously adapt to environmental, psychological, metabolic, and immunological challenges through dynamic regulatory mechanisms.[3–5] This adaptive capacity forms the basis of physiological resilience and underlies the interconnected concepts of adaptation, allostasis, and resilience.[3–5]

#### Physiological Adaptation: The Foundation of Survival

Adaptation refers to the ability of an organism to modify physiological, biochemical, cellular, or behavioral responses in response to internal and external stressors.[3,6] Common stressors include psychological stress, environmental changes, nutritional fluctuations, infections, physical exertion, sleep deprivation, occupational stress, and social challenges.

Examples of adaptation include increased cardiac output during exercise, thermoregulation, immune activation during infection, neuroendocrine responses to stress, and metabolic adjustments during fasting.[1,6] These responses are generally beneficial when appropriately activated and time-limited.[1,6]

### General Adaptation Syndrome

Hans Selye proposed the **General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)** as a model describing the body's response to stress.[12]

#### 1. Alarm Stage

Initial activation of the sympathetic nervous system and HPA axis, characterized by increased heart rate, blood pressure, cortisol secretion, and alertness.

#### 2. Resistance Stage

The body adapts to persistent stress through sustained physiological adjustments, maintaining elevated cortisol levels and mobilizing energy reserves.

#### 3. Exhaustion Stage

Prolonged stress may overwhelm adaptive mechanisms, resulting in immune dysfunction, metabolic disturbances, chronic inflammation, and increased disease susceptibility.[12]

### Emergence of Allostasis

To explain the dynamic nature of physiological regulation, McEwen and Sterling introduced the concept of **allostasis**, defined as “stability through change.”[3,5] Unlike homeostasis, which focuses on maintaining relatively constant physiological set points, allostasis emphasizes flexibility and predictive adaptation to anticipated demands.[3–5]

Examples include:

- Increased cortisol before awakening
- Elevated heart rate during emotional anticipation
- Metabolic adjustments during fasting
- Immune adaptations during infection

**Table 2. Comparison Between Homeostasis and Allostasis**

Feature	Homeostasis	Allostasis
Primary Goal	Maintain stability	Achieve stability through adaptation
Regulatory Strategy	Feedback control	Predictive regulation
Physiological Set Point	Relatively fixed	Dynamic and flexible
Response to Stress	Correct deviation	Anticipate future demands
Major Contributors	Cannon	McEwen, Sterling

Clinical Relevance	Acute regulation	Chronic adaptation and resilience
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### Allostatic Load: The Biological Cost of Adaptation

Although allostasis is essential for survival, chronic activation of adaptive mechanisms may lead to **allostatic load**, the cumulative physiological burden associated with prolonged stress exposure.[3,6,10]

Major contributors include:

- Chronic psychological stress
- Poor sleep quality
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Obesity
- Chronic inflammation
- Social adversity
- Environmental stressors

Elevated allostatic load affects multiple physiological systems and contributes to disease development.[6,10]

### Physiological Consequences of Elevated Allostatic Load

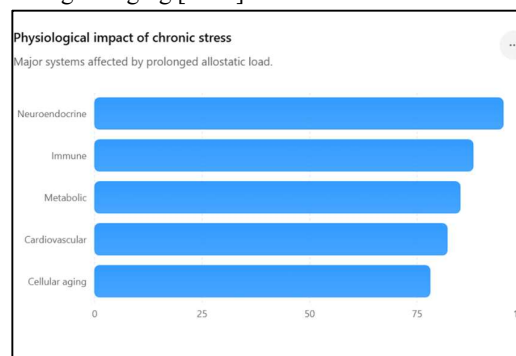
**Neuroendocrine:** Chronic HPA-axis activation, elevated cortisol, impaired neuroplasticity, cognitive dysfunction.

**Immune:** Cytokine dysregulation, chronic low-grade inflammation, reduced immune competence.

**Metabolic:** Insulin resistance, central obesity, dyslipidemia, metabolic syndrome.

**Cardiovascular:** Hypertension, endothelial dysfunction, accelerated vascular aging.

**Cellular:** Oxidative stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, telomere shortening, accelerated biological aging.[6–10]



### Impact of Chronic Stress on Physiological Systems

#### Physiological Resilience

Physiological resilience refers to the capacity of biological systems to resist disruption, recover after stress, restore equilibrium, and maintain adaptability.[10] It is increasingly recognized as a key determinant of successful aging and long-term health outcomes.

#### Levels of Physiological Resilience

**Cellular Resilience:** DNA repair, antioxidant defenses, protein quality control, and mitochondrial maintenance.

**Neurophysiological Resilience:** Neuroplasticity, cognitive flexibility, stress tolerance, and emotional regulation.

**Immune Resilience:** Effective pathogen defense, controlled inflammatory responses, and immunological memory.

**Metabolic Resilience:** Glucose regulation, energy balance, mitochondrial efficiency, and hormonal stability.[10]

#### Figure. Conceptual Framework Linking Homeostasis, Adaptation and Resilience

Environmental Stressors

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Adaptation

↓

Allostasis

↓

Physiological Resilience

↓

Homeostatic Restoration

↓

Health and Longevity

#### Relevance to Rasayana

The concepts of adaptation, allostasis, and resilience closely parallel the traditional objectives of Rasayana therapy.[13–15] Classical Rasayana is described as promoting *Vyadhikshamatva* (disease resistance), *Ayushya* (longevity), *Medha* (cognitive enhancement), *Bala* (strength), *Ojas*, and delayed aging.

From a modern physiological perspective, these effects may correspond to enhanced adaptive capacity, neuroendocrine stability, immune homeostasis, antioxidant defense, cellular resilience, and healthy aging mechanisms. Thus, Rasayana may be interpreted as a biological strategy that reduces allostatic load while enhancing resilience and restoring systemic homeostasis.[18–20]

#### 4. Rasayana: Classical Foundations and Biological Interpretation

Rasayana is a specialized branch of Ayurveda concerned with promotion of longevity, vitality, disease resistance, and preservation of physical and mental health.[13–15] Unlike therapies directed solely toward disease management, Rasayana emphasizes maintenance of biological integrity and healthy aging, closely aligning with modern concepts of physiological resilience and preventive medicine.[1,10]

The term *Rasayana* is derived from *Rasa* (nutritive essence) and *Ayana* (pathway), indicating interventions that enhance nourishment, tissue quality, and physiological functioning.[13] Classical texts describe Rasayana as promoting longevity (*Ayushya*), intelligence (*Medha*), strength (*Bala*), vitality (*Ojas*), and freedom from disease (*Arogyata*).[13–15]

#### Classical Objectives of Rasayana

The principal objectives of Rasayana include:[13–15]

- Promotion of longevity (*Ayushya*)
- Enhancement of strength (*Bala*)
- Improvement of cognition (*Medha*)
- Maintenance of immunity (*Vyadhikshamatva*)
- Preservation of youthfulness (*Vayasthapana*)
- Enhancement of vitality (*Ojas*)
- Prevention of age-related degeneration
- Improvement of tissue nourishment (*Dhatu Poshana*)

These traditional concepts show notable parallels with contemporary physiological and molecular sciences.[18–20]

#### Rasayana and Biological Response Modification

Modern medicine recognizes biological response modifiers as interventions that improve adaptation, stress tolerance, immunity, and systemic regulation.[19,20] Rasayana demonstrates similar properties, including:

- Enhancement of adaptive responses
- Improved stress tolerance
- Immunomodulation
- Antioxidant activity
- Neuroprotection
- Anti-inflammatory effects
- Cytoprotection
- Promotion of healthy aging

Thus, Rasayana may be viewed as a traditional biological response modulation strategy that helps maintain physiological equilibrium under stress.[18–20]

### Rasayana and Adaptogenic Science

The concept of adaptogens provides an important scientific bridge between Rasayana and modern physiology.[19,20] Adaptogens enhance resistance to physical, chemical, and biological stressors while normalizing physiological functions.[19]

Major physiological targets include:

- HPA axis
- Cortisol regulation
- Neurotransmitter balance
- Immune function
- Oxidative stress pathways
- Mitochondrial activity

Many Rasayana dravyas exhibit these effects, suggesting considerable overlap between Rasayana pharmacology and adaptogenic science.[19–23]

### Rasayana and Neuroendocrine Homeostasis

Neuroendocrine balance is essential for adaptation and resilience.[1,6] Dysregulation contributes to anxiety, depression, obesity, metabolic syndrome, and chronic fatigue.[6–10]

### Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*)

Clinical studies have demonstrated:

- Reduced serum cortisol levels
- Improved stress tolerance
- Reduced anxiety
- Better sleep quality
- Enhanced cognitive performance[21–23]

These findings suggest that Ashwagandha enhances resilience through modulation of HPA-axis activity and neuroendocrine homeostasis.[21–23]

### Rasayana and Immune Homeostasis

The immune system maintains physiological stability through balanced regulation of innate and adaptive immunity.[1,10] Persistent immune dysregulation contributes to chronic inflammatory diseases, autoimmune disorders, metabolic dysfunction, and aging.

### Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*)

Studies indicate that Guduchi may:

- Enhance macrophage activity
- Improve immune responsiveness
- Regulate cytokine production
- Reduce inflammatory stress[24–26]

These effects support restoration of immune homeostasis and disease resistance.

### Rasayana and Oxidative Stress Regulation

Oxidative stress is a major contributor to aging and chronic disease.[27–29] Excessive reactive oxygen species (ROS) cause DNA damage, mitochondrial dysfunction, inflammation, and cellular senescence.[27]

### Amalaki (*Emblica officinalis*)

Amalaki contains vitamin C, polyphenols, tannins, and flavonoids and has demonstrated:

- Free radical scavenging activity
- Reduction of oxidative damage
- Cellular protection
- Enhancement of antioxidant enzyme systems[27–29]

These effects contribute to cellular resilience and healthy aging.

### Rasayana and Healthy Aging

Modern geroscience recognizes aging as a progressive decline in resilience and adaptive capacity.[10] Hallmarks include genomic instability, mitochondrial dysfunction, cellular senescence, and chronic inflammation. The classical goals of Rasayana closely parallel contemporary healthy aging strategies.[13–15]

By enhancing adaptation, reducing oxidative stress, supporting immune competence, and preserving physiological function, Rasayana may contribute to maintenance of biological resilience throughout aging.[18–20]

**Table 3. Classical Rasayana Concepts and Modern Physiological Correlates**

Classical Concept	Physiological Interpretation
Ayushya	Healthy longevity
Bala	Functional capacity and resilience
Ojas	Integrated immune and physiological vitality
Medha	Cognitive performance and neuroplasticity
Vyadhikshamatva	Immune competence
Vayasthapana	Healthy aging and delayed senescence
Dhatu Poshana	Tissue nourishment and metabolic regulation

**Figure. Biological Interpretation of Rasayana**

Rasayana  
↓

Adaptation Enhancement  
 ↓  
 Homeostatic Regulation  
 ↓  
 Neuroendocrine Balance  
 Immune Modulation  
 Antioxidant Protection  
 Mitochondrial Support  
 ↓  
 Physiological Resilience  
 ↓  
 Healthy Aging & Disease Prevention

**5. Physiological and Molecular Basis of Rasayana Action**

Advances in molecular biology, systems physiology, and pharmacology have provided new insights into the mechanisms of Rasayana therapy. Contemporary evidence suggests that Rasayana dravyas influence multiple physiological and molecular pathways involved in adaptation, homeostasis, and resilience.[18–20] Unlike conventional drugs that often target a single pathway, Rasayana exhibits multitarget actions affecting neuroendocrine, immune, metabolic, and cellular regulatory systems simultaneously.[19,20,30]

**5.1 Modulation of the Hypothalamic–Pituitary–Adrenal (HPA) Axis**

The HPA axis is a key regulator of stress adaptation.[6,7] Activation involves release of corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH), adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH), and cortisol.[1,6] While acute cortisol release supports adaptation, chronic activation contributes to anxiety, depression, obesity, hypertension, metabolic syndrome, and accelerated aging.[6–10]

**Evidence from Ashwagandha**

Clinical trials have demonstrated that Ashwagandha significantly reduces serum cortisol levels and perceived stress scores.[21,22] Chandrasekhar et al. reported marked reductions in stress and cortisol levels following Ashwagandha supplementation.[21] These findings suggest that Rasayana may reduce allostatic load through modulation of neuroendocrine stress pathways.[19–23]

**5.2 Immunomodulation and Immune Homeostasis**

Immune homeostasis depends upon a balance between pro-inflammatory and anti-inflammatory responses, pathogen defense, and tissue repair.[10] Dysregulation contributes to chronic inflammatory

diseases, autoimmune disorders, metabolic dysfunction, and neurodegeneration.[10]

**Guduchi and Immune Regulation**

Studies indicate that Guduchi enhances macrophage activity, improves phagocytosis, modulates T-cell responses, and regulates cytokine production.[24–26] Reported effects include modulation of TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-6, and IL-1 $\beta$ , supporting restoration of immune equilibrium rather than simple immune stimulation.[24–26]

**5.3 Oxidative Stress Modulation**

Oxidative stress is a major contributor to aging and lifestyle disorders.[27–29] Excessive reactive oxygen species (ROS) damage DNA, proteins, lipids, and mitochondria, leading to cellular dysfunction.[27]

**Major Oxidative Stress Biomarkers**

- Malondialdehyde (MDA)
- Reactive oxygen species (ROS)
- Superoxide dismutase (SOD)
- Catalase
- Glutathione peroxidase (GPx)

**Amalaki and Antioxidant Defense**

Amalaki contains ascorbic acid, gallic acid, ellagic acid, Emblicanin A, and Emblicanin B.[27–29] Studies have demonstrated reduction in lipid peroxidation, enhancement of antioxidant enzyme activity, and protection against oxidative damage, thereby supporting cellular homeostasis and resilience.[27–29]

**Table 4. Molecular Mechanisms of Major Rasayana Dravyas**

Rasayana Dravya	Principal Constituents	Molecular Targets	Physiological Effects
Ashwagandha	Withanolides	HPA axis, cortisol regulation	Stress adaptation
Guduchi	Alkaloids, diterpenoids	Cytokine regulation	Immune homeostasis
Amalaki	Polyphenols, vitamin C	Antioxidant pathways	Oxidative stress reduction
Shatavari	Steroidal saponins	Endocrine pathways	Hormonal regulation

Yashtima dhu	Glycyrrhizin	Inflammatory mediators	Anti-inflammatory effects
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Sources: [21–29]

#### 5.4 Mitochondrial Function and Cellular Energy Homeostasis

Mitochondria regulate ATP production, cellular signaling, apoptosis, oxidative stress responses, immune activation, and aging.[1] Mitochondrial dysfunction contributes to metabolic syndrome, neurodegeneration, chronic fatigue, and accelerated aging.[10]

Evidence suggests that Rasayana herbs support mitochondrial integrity through antioxidant activity, reduction of mitochondrial ROS, promotion of mitochondrial biogenesis, and membrane protection.[19,20,27–29] These actions enhance cellular resilience and adaptive capacity.

#### 5.5 Inflammatory Signaling Pathways

Chronic low-grade inflammation is a hallmark of many lifestyle disorders, including obesity, diabetes, atherosclerosis, neurodegeneration, and cancer.[9,10]

##### NF-κB Pathway

NF-κB is a key transcription factor regulating inflammatory gene expression. Excessive activation increases production of TNF-α, IL-6, IL-1β, and C-reactive protein (CRP). Several Rasayana dravyas have been shown to suppress NF-κB activation and reduce chronic inflammation.[24–29]

#### 5.6 Nrf2-Mediated Cytoprotection

Nrf2 is a major cellular defense mechanism against oxidative stress. Its activation promotes expression of antioxidant and detoxification enzymes, including superoxide dismutase, catalase, and glutathione-related enzymes.[27–29]

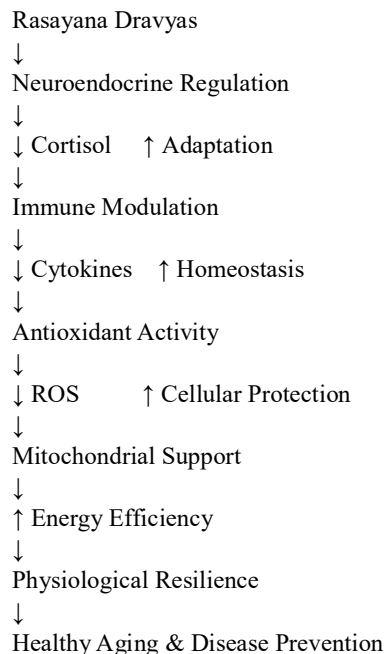
Several phytochemicals present in Rasayana dravyas activate Nrf2 signaling, resulting in enhanced antioxidant capacity, improved cellular survival, and reduced oxidative damage.[27–29]

#### 5.7 Neuroplasticity and Cognitive Resilience

Neuroplasticity refers to the nervous system's ability to adapt structurally and functionally to environmental demands.[1] Impaired neuroplasticity contributes to cognitive decline, depression, anxiety, and neurodegenerative diseases.

Experimental studies suggest that Rasayana herbs promote neurogenesis, synaptic plasticity, neurotransmitter balance, and cognitive performance.[21–23] These observations provide a physiological basis for the classical concept of *Medhya* (cognitive enhancement).

#### Figure. Molecular Basis of Rasayana Action



#### 6. Evidence Synthesis from Experimental and Clinical Studies

The scientific validity of Rasayana therapy is increasingly supported by experimental and clinical evidence demonstrating measurable effects on stress adaptation, immune regulation, oxidative balance, cognition, and healthy aging.[19–29] Although study designs and outcome measures vary, a consistent trend toward improved physiological resilience and homeostatic regulation has been reported.[19–29]

##### 6.1 Clinical Evidence on Stress Adaptation and Neuroendocrine Regulation

Stress adaptation is among the most extensively studied domains of Rasayana research. Clinical studies on Ashwagandha have consistently demonstrated reductions in perceived stress, serum cortisol levels, anxiety symptoms, and sleep disturbances, along with improved quality of life and adaptive capacity.[21–23]

##### Table 5. Clinical Evidence on Stress Adaptation and Neuroendocrine Regulation

Author	Study Design	Intervention	Duration	Major Outcome
Chandra sekhar et al., 2012[21]	Randomized double-blind placebo-controlled trial	Ashwagandha root extract	60 days	Significant reduction in stress and cortisol levels
Lopresti et al., 2019[22]	Clinical trial	Ashwagandha extract	8 weeks	Reduced anxiety and improved resilience
NIH Review, 2025[23]	Evidence review	Ashwagandha preparations	Multiple studies	Consistent stress-reducing effects

**Interpretation:** Reduced cortisol levels indicate modulation of HPA-axis activity and decreased allostatic load, supporting the traditional Rasayana objective of enhancing adaptation and physiological equilibrium.[19–23]

### 6.2 Evidence on Immune Homeostasis

Immune dysregulation contributes significantly to chronic diseases and age-related decline.[10] Among Rasayana dravyas, Guduchi has been extensively investigated for its immunomodulatory properties.

**Table 6. Experimental Evidence on Immune Modulation**

Author	Model	Intervention	Outcome
Upadhay et al., 2010[25]	Experimental review	Guduchi	Enhanced immune responsiveness
Sharma et al., 2012[26]	Laboratory study	Guduchi extracts	Cytokine regulation

Gupta et al., 2024[24]	Comprehensive review	Guduchi phytochemicals	Immunomodulatory effects
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**Interpretation:** Guduchi enhances macrophage activity, phagocytosis, and cytokine regulation, supporting immune homeostasis rather than indiscriminate immune stimulation.[10,24–26]

### 6.3 Evidence on Oxidative Stress and Cellular Protection

Oxidative stress is a common mechanism underlying aging, metabolic disorders, cardiovascular disease, and neurodegeneration.[27–29] Amalaki is one of the most extensively studied antioxidant Rasayana dravyas.

Reported effects include:

- Increased antioxidant enzyme activity
- Reduced lipid peroxidation
- Protection against oxidative injury
- Improved redox balance[27–29]

**Table 7. Evidence on Antioxidant Activity**

Author	Intervention	Biomarker Evaluated	Outcome
Golecha et al., 2010[28]	Amalaki extract	Oxidative stress markers	Significant reduction
Variya et al., 2016[29]	Literature review	Antioxidant activity	Strong antioxidant potential
Prananda et al., 2023[27]	Comprehensive review	Cellular protection	Cytoprotective effects

**Interpretation:** The antioxidant activity of Amalaki contributes to preservation of cellular homeostasis and physiological resilience through reduction of oxidative burden.[27–29]

### 6.4 Evidence Map of Major Physiological Actions

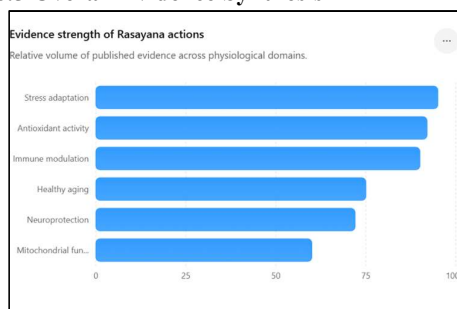
**Table 8. Physiological Targets of Major Rasayana Dravyas**

Rasayana Dravya	Stress Adaptation	Immune Regulation	Antioxidant Activity	Neuroprotection	Healthy Aging
Ashwagandha	+++	++	++	+++	++
Guduchi	++	+++	++	+	++
Amalaki	+	++	+++	++	++ +
Shatavari	++	+	++	+	++
Yashtimadhu	+	++	++	++	+

Sources: [21–29]

### Evidence strength of Rasayana actions

#### 6.5 Overall Evidence Synthesis



Current evidence demonstrates that Rasayana dravyas exert measurable effects across multiple physiological systems involved in homeostatic regulation.[19–29]

The strongest evidence supports:

1. Stress adaptation and HPA-axis modulation
2. Antioxidant activity
3. Immune regulation

Moderate evidence exists for neuroprotection, cognitive enhancement, and healthy aging, while emerging evidence suggests beneficial roles in mitochondrial function, cellular resilience, and systems-level physiological regulation.

Overall, the available literature supports the hypothesis that Rasayana interventions function as multisystem biological response modifiers capable of enhancing adaptation and resilience while reducing allostatic burden.[18–30]

### 7. Relevance of Rasayana in Modern Lifestyle Disorders

Lifestyle disorders have emerged as major global health challenges due to urbanization, sedentary behavior, unhealthy diets, chronic stress, sleep disturbances, and environmental factors.[8–10] Despite their clinical diversity, these conditions share common mechanisms including homeostatic dysregulation, increased allostatic load, chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, neuroendocrine imbalance, mitochondrial dysfunction, and reduced physiological resilience.[3,6–10]

Given these shared pathways, interventions capable of restoring physiological balance and enhancing adaptive capacity have gained increasing attention. Rasayana dravyas, through their multidimensional biological actions, may offer a valuable framework for addressing these disturbances.[18–20]

#### 7.1 Obesity and Metabolic Dysregulation

Obesity is characterized by excessive adiposity, chronic inflammation, insulin resistance, and altered neuroendocrine signaling.[8,10] Persistent obesity is associated with oxidative stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, inflammatory cytokine activation, and increased allostatic load.[9,10]

Several Rasayana dravyas exhibit antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and metabolic regulatory effects that may support cellular homeostasis and metabolic resilience.[18–20,27–29]

#### 7.2 Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus

Type 2 diabetes represents a state of disrupted glucose homeostasis and metabolic regulation.[8] Chronic hyperglycemia promotes oxidative stress, endothelial dysfunction, inflammation, mitochondrial injury, and accelerated aging.

Rasayana dravyas possess antioxidant, cytoprotective, and anti-inflammatory properties that may help reduce the physiological burden associated with chronic metabolic stress and support restoration of metabolic equilibrium.[18–20,27–29]

#### 7.3 Hypertension and Cardiovascular Stress

Hypertension involves dysregulation of vascular homeostasis and autonomic balance.[8] Chronic stress, sympathetic overactivity, endothelial dysfunction, oxidative stress, and inflammation contribute significantly to disease progression.[6,7]

Through modulation of stress pathways and antioxidant defenses, Rasayana interventions may support cardiovascular resilience and maintenance of physiological balance.[18–20]

#### 7.4 Chronic Psychological Stress

Chronic psychological stress is a major contributor to modern disease burden.[9–12] Persistent activation of the HPA axis and sympathetic nervous system results in elevated cortisol levels, sleep disturbances, anxiety, immune dysfunction, metabolic abnormalities, and accelerated aging.[6,7]

Ashwagandha has demonstrated significant reductions in perceived stress and serum cortisol concentrations, suggesting a potential role in reducing allostatic load and improving adaptive capacity.[21–23]

### 7.5 Anxiety and Burnout Syndrome

Burnout syndrome is increasingly associated with prolonged occupational and psychological stress.[10,11] It is characterized by emotional exhaustion, cognitive fatigue, impaired motivation, and sleep disturbances.

Underlying mechanisms include disturbances in HPA-axis activity, neurotransmitter balance, autonomic regulation, and inflammatory pathways. Rasayana dravyas with adaptogenic and neuroprotective properties may contribute to restoration of neurophysiological resilience and stress tolerance.[19–23]

### 7.6 Healthy Aging and Longevity

Healthy aging represents one of the most important contemporary applications of Rasayana.[13–15] Aging is associated with progressive decline in homeostatic capacity, immune competence, mitochondrial function, cellular repair, and physiological resilience.[10]

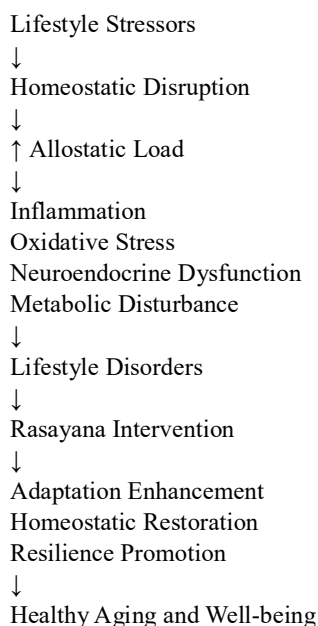
These concerns closely parallel the classical objectives of Rasayana, including *Ayushya* (longevity), *Vayasthapana* (preservation of youthfulness), *Bala* (strength), *Medha* (cognition), and *Ojas* (vitality).[13–15] The antioxidant, immunomodulatory, adaptogenic, and cytoprotective effects of Rasayana dravyas provide plausible biological mechanisms supporting healthy aging and long-term physiological function.[18–29]

**Table 9. Lifestyle Disorders and Potential Physiological Relevance of Rasayana**

Lifestyle Disorder	Major Physiological Disturbance	Potential Rasayana Action	Key References
Obesity	Metabolic dysregulation,	Antioxidant and	[18–20,27–29]

	inflammation	adaptive support	
Type 2 Diabetes	Oxidative stress, insulin resistance	Cellular protection and homeostasis	[18–20,27–29]
Hypertension	Stress physiology, endothelial dysfunction	Adaptogenic and antioxidant effects	[6,7,18–20]
Chronic Stress	HPA-axis overactivation	Cortisol regulation	[21–23]
Anxiety/Burnout	Neuroendocrine dysregulation	Neuroprotection and resilience	[19–23]
Healthy Aging	Reduced resilience and cellular repair	Rasayana and longevity promotion	[13–15,18–29]

**Figure. Rasayana and Modern Lifestyle Disorders**



### 8. Emerging Concepts: Systems Biology, Network Pharmacology and Future Directions

Advances in physiology, molecular biology, systems medicine, and computational sciences have shifted biomedical research from reductionist models

toward systems-oriented approaches that recognize the complex interactions among biological networks.[30–32] In this context, Rasayana is particularly relevant because it emphasizes holistic regulation, systemic balance, and maintenance of physiological integrity rather than targeting a single disease process.[13–15]

Modern disciplines such as systems biology, network pharmacology, omics sciences, precision medicine, and artificial intelligence provide valuable frameworks for understanding the multidimensional actions of Rasayana dravyas.[30–32]

### 8.1 Systems Biology and Physiological Integration

Systems biology studies organisms as integrated networks rather than isolated components.[30] It focuses on cellular interactions, organ-system communication, regulatory feedback loops, adaptive responses, and network-level behavior.

From this perspective, physiological resilience emerges through coordinated interactions among the nervous, endocrine, immune, metabolic, and cellular signaling systems.[3–10] This systems-based approach closely parallels the Ayurvedic concept of maintaining health through harmonious physiological functioning.[13–15]

### 8.2 Network Pharmacology and Rasayana

Conventional pharmacology often follows a “one drug–one target” approach, whereas chronic disorders involve multiple interconnected pathways.[30]

Network pharmacology examines how bioactive compounds simultaneously influence multiple molecular targets and biological systems.[30–32] This concept is highly relevant to Rasayana, as herbs such as Ashwagandha, Guduchi, and Amalaki contain diverse phytochemicals capable of modulating neuroendocrine regulation, immune function, oxidative stress pathways, inflammatory signaling, and cognitive processes.[21–29]

Thus, network pharmacology provides a scientific explanation for the broad-spectrum physiological actions traditionally attributed to Rasayana therapy.[30–32]

### Table 10. Classical Rasayana and Modern Systems Concepts

Classical Rasayana Concept	Modern Scientific Interpretation
Ojas	Integrated physiological vitality
Bala	Functional reserve and resilience
Vyadhikshamatva	Immune competence
Medha	Neuroplasticity and cognition
Vayasthapana	Healthy aging biology
Rasayana	Biological response modulation
Dhatu Poshana	Tissue homeostasis and metabolic regulation

Sources: [13–15,18–20]

### 8.3 Omics Sciences and Rasayana Research

Recent advances in genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics, and microbiomics provide unprecedented opportunities to investigate the molecular basis of Rasayana interventions.[30–32]

These technologies may help identify:

- Molecular signatures of Rasayana action
- Biomarkers of physiological resilience
- Genetic determinants of treatment response
- Novel pathways involved in adaptation and healthy aging

### 8.4 Precision Medicine and Individualized Health

Precision medicine aims to tailor healthcare according to genetic, environmental, metabolic, and lifestyle factors. Ayurveda has historically emphasized individualized approaches through concepts such as *Prakriti* and personalized therapeutic strategies.[13–15]

Future integration of precision medicine with Rasayana research may facilitate development of individualized resilience-enhancing interventions.

### 8.5 Artificial Intelligence and Predictive Health Sciences

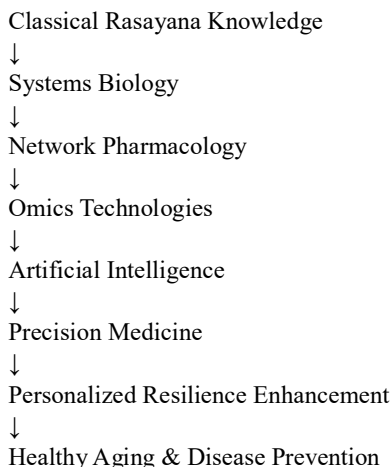
Artificial intelligence is increasingly applied in biomedical research through data integration, predictive modeling, drug discovery, systems analysis, and clinical decision support.

AI-assisted approaches may support Rasayana research by:

- Identifying phytochemical interactions
- Predicting molecular targets
- Analyzing biological networks
- Discovering novel therapeutic applications

These technologies may accelerate scientific validation of traditional formulations and improve understanding of their systems-level effects.[30–32]

**Figure. Future Scientific Framework for Rasayana Research**



**8.6 Research Gaps and Future Priorities**

Despite growing evidence supporting Rasayana, several limitations remain, including limited large-scale randomized controlled trials, lack of standardized outcome measures, heterogeneity in formulations, insufficient long-term follow-up, and limited mechanistic studies in humans.

Future priorities include:

- Biomarker-based clinical trials
- Systems biology investigations
- Multi-omics research
- Longitudinal healthy aging cohorts
- Precision medicine integration
- AI-assisted phytopharmacological studies

Addressing these challenges will strengthen the evidence base and facilitate broader scientific acceptance of Rasayana interventions.[30–32]

**9. Discussion**

The present review reinterprets the classical concept of Rasayana through the contemporary frameworks of homeostasis, adaptation, allostasis, and physiological resilience. Analysis of classical literature alongside modern experimental and clinical evidence reveals substantial convergence between traditional Rasayana principles and current understanding of stress physiology, biological regulation, and healthy aging.[1–5,13–20]

Traditionally, Rasayana has been described as a means of promoting longevity, vitality, immunity, cognition, and disease resistance.[13–15] Modern physiology similarly recognizes that health depends upon effective regulation of neuroendocrine,

immune, metabolic, and cellular systems.[1,10] This overlap provides a scientific basis for interpreting Rasayana within contemporary biomedical paradigms.

A key observation emerging from this review is the close similarity between Rasayana and the modern concept of physiological resilience. Both emphasize adaptation, recovery, maintenance of vitality, and long-term preservation of health rather than merely treating established disease.[10,13–15]

The concept of allostasis further strengthens this relationship. While adaptive responses are essential for survival, chronic activation results in allostatic load, contributing to inflammation, oxidative stress, metabolic dysfunction, and accelerated aging.[3,6,7] Many major lifestyle disorders including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, anxiety, and age-related degeneration are linked to excessive allostatic burden.[8–10]

Available evidence suggests that Rasayana dravyas may influence several pathways involved in reducing this burden. Ashwagandha demonstrates adaptogenic and stress-modulating effects, Guduchi exhibits immunomodulatory activity, and Amalaki provides antioxidant protection.[21–29] Collectively, these actions support adaptive physiology, immune regulation, and cellular protection.

Another important finding is the multidimensional nature of Rasayana action. Unlike conventional pharmacological approaches that often target single pathways, Rasayana dravyas influence multiple interconnected biological systems simultaneously.[19,20,30] This observation aligns closely with contemporary systems biology and network pharmacology, which view disease as a consequence of disturbances within complex biological networks.[30–32]

The reviewed evidence also highlights oxidative stress modulation as a central mechanism of Rasayana activity. By enhancing endogenous antioxidant defenses and reducing oxidative injury, Rasayana herbs may preserve cellular homeostasis and physiological resilience.[27–29] Similarly, modulation of neuroendocrine pathways appears important, particularly through regulation of HPA-axis activity and cortisol levels observed with Ashwagandha supplementation.[21–23]

Despite these promising findings, several limitations remain. Much of the current evidence is derived from preclinical studies, small clinical trials, and heterogeneous research designs.[21–29] Variability in formulations, dosages, treatment duration, and outcome measures limits direct comparison across studies. Furthermore, large multicenter randomized

controlled trials evaluating biomarkers of resilience are still limited.

Another challenge involves translating classical Ayurvedic concepts into measurable scientific constructs. Although correlations between Rasayana and concepts such as adaptation, resilience, and homeostasis are compelling, further mechanistic studies are required to establish definitive biological links.[18–20]

Emerging approaches including systems biology, network pharmacology, metabolomics, proteomics, transcriptomics, and artificial intelligence offer promising opportunities for elucidating the complex mechanisms underlying Rasayana interventions.[30–32] These tools are particularly suited to studying multitarget therapies that influence multiple physiological pathways simultaneously.

From a public health perspective, the increasing burden of lifestyle disorders underscores the need for preventive approaches that enhance resilience and long-term health.[8–10] The Rasayana framework is particularly relevant because it emphasizes adaptation, vitality, and healthy aging rather than disease management alone.

Overall, the available evidence supports the interpretation of Rasayana as a traditional biological strategy aimed at optimizing homeostasis, enhancing adaptation, reducing allostatic burden, and promoting physiological resilience. Although further high-quality clinical and mechanistic investigations are required, contemporary physiological and molecular sciences increasingly support the relevance of Rasayana concepts in modern health research.[18–32]

### Conclusion

The concepts of homeostasis, adaptation, and resilience are central to maintaining health and preventing disease in modern physiology. The present review demonstrates that Rasayana dravyas possess multidimensional biological activities, including adaptogenic, antioxidant, immunomodulatory, and cytoprotective effects, which closely align with contemporary mechanisms involved in physiological regulation and stress adaptation.[18–29] Emerging evidence suggests that these interventions may support neuroendocrine balance, immune homeostasis, and healthy aging while reducing the burden of chronic lifestyle-related disorders.[3–10] Thus, Rasayana can be interpreted as a holistic biological strategy for enhancing physiological resilience and promoting long-term health. Further high-quality clinical and mechanistic studies are required to strengthen the scientific evidence and facilitate its integration into modern preventive healthcare.[30–32]

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