

CONCEPT OF EARLY AGING IN INDIAN SYSTEM OF MEDICINE*

BY

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Abstract

Ayurveda is known as ancient life science and describe many ways to prevent and manage early aging. Ayurveda has a separate branch for early aging known as Jaraa or Geriatrics, in which many remedies are described in a unique way known as Rasayana. Rasayana is the way to get dhatus of best quality or Rasyana are medicines that cure early aging and diseases. Acharya Charak mentioned two types of rejuvenation therapy; one is Kutipraaveshik and another is Vataatpik. In present era Rasayana or Rejuvenation therapy becomes more necessary due to our life style. Today's life style is 'Hurry, Worry and Curry' and it causes early aging in our youth society. Common signs of early aging are dementia, arthritis, hair loss, poor vision, stress etc. So the main object of this article is to define necessity and usage of Rejuvenation therapy in relation to early aging.

Key words: *Jaraa, Rasayana, Kutipraaveshik, Vataatpik, Rejuvenation, Early aging.*

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Aging is the aggregate of the changes occurring since birth to death, and the process of growing old or aging is gradual structural changes that occur with the passage of time, that are not due to disease or accident. In ancient Ayurveda aging or *Jaraa* is defined as *Swabhavik Vyadhi*.

In modern science there are many theories about aging but most popular theory is free radical theory. Free radicals are produced in mitochondria as by products of ATP and damage protein, lipid, nucleic acids and DNA. It results in DNA alteration and mutation which leads to aging and age related degenerative diseases like progressive dementia, vision loss, neurosensory deafness, abnormal cardiac and renal functions etc. They also act upon RNA and causes defective protein synthesis.

Ayurveda texts mention *Jaraa* as *Swabhavabala Pravritta Vyadhi* along with *Nidra* and *Mrityu*. A reason behind *Jaraa* or growing older is progressively disturbed "*Saamyataa*", imbalance in quantity and functions of *Dosha, Dhātu, Mala* and *Agni*. *Acharya Sharangdhar* described that with each decade of life the individual loses certain qualities. i.e.:

| Decade of life | Qualities lost |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 – 10 | Childhood (<i>baalya</i>) |
| 11 – 20 | Growth (<i>vridhhi</i>) |
| 21 – 30 | Lustre (<i>chavi</i>) |
| 31 – 40 | Intelligence (<i>medha</i>) |
| 41 – 50 | Complexion (<i>tvak</i>) |
| 51 – 60 | Eye sight (<i>drishti</i>) |

| | |
|----------|---|
| 61 – 70 | Semen (<i>shukra</i>) |
| 71 – 80 | Courage (<i>vikram</i>) |
| 81 – 90 | Knowledge (<i>buddhi</i>) |
| 91 - 100 | Proper functioning of motor system (<i>karmendriya</i>) |

Swabhavabala Pravritta Vyadhi is divided into two parts *Kalaja* (*parirakshanakrit*) or *Akalaja* (*aparirakshankrit*). *Kala-Jaraa* (timely old age) is *Sahaja* in nature and *Akala-Jaraa* (early aging) is unnatural and unprogrammed. This type of *Jaraa* induces many problems.

In modern era we are aging early due to our life style. Today's life style is very hectic & practically every person suffers from over exertion physically or mentally. There is feeling of insecurity, stress & strain. The diet has also changed. People are eating more fast foods, food with preservatives and junk food. We are consuming antagonistic food; unsuitable, rough, alkaline, channel blocking substances; decomposed heavy, putrefied and stale food items, indulging in irregular diet or eating while the previous food is undigested, day sleep, performing irregular and excessive or nil physical exercise result in early aging in the body. Similarly organic fertilizers are being replaced by chemical ones and use of pesticides is also increasing. All these lead to poor nutrition of the body. As more and more gadgets are being made available to the man there is increasing tendency of lethargy and lack of exercise. Addiction substances are increasing like smoking, tobacco, drugs like opium, hashish etc.

Because of all of these factors muscles get relaxed, joints get loosened, blood gets impure, fat becomes abundant & liquefied, marrow doesn't mature in bones, semen doesn't manifest & *Ojas* deteriorate. Thus the person subdued with malaise, depression, sleep, drowsiness, lassitude, lack of enthusiasm, dyspnoea, joint pain, incapability in physical and mental activities, loss of memory, intellect & lustre, becomes resort of illness and thus doesn't enjoy the normal life span.

In short we can say that faulty food habits & altered life style deviates body's *Dosha* that results in disturbed *Agni* and formation of impaired *Aahar Rasa*. Impaired *Aahar Rasa* results in diseases and decay of tissues. *Rasa* should be present in adequate quantity and should be able to penetrate throughout the various cell of the body to provide nourishment & to build excellent *Dhatu*. Impaired *Rasa* built unhealthy *Dhatu* and leads to early aging.

If this process is somehow arrested by supplying *Rasa* in adequate quantity with the power to penetrate, aging can be delayed.

The best way to get adequate *Rasa* or excellent *Dhatu* is *Rasayana* or Rejuvenation therapy. *Rasayana tantra*, one of the important branch of *Astangayurveda* which deals with preventive health for leading a normal life. *Rasayana* was designed in classical Ayurveda as an effective tool to synthesize *Dhatu* par – excellence (*Prasastha Dhatu*). *Rasayana* is that by which one can attains *Rasa* etc. *Dhatu* with affluence; or the means of attainment of longevity, strength, energy & firmness and sustaining youthfulness as effects of *Rasa*, *Virya* & *Vipaka* located in drugs is *Rasayana*. Bhava misra's interpretation of *Rasyana* comprises following features and effects of *Rasayana*.

- *Jara vidhvansi* – anti sterility or preventing old age
- *Vyadhi vidhvansi* – destroying the disease
- *Vayastambhakara* – age sustaining
- *Caksusya* – enhance vision
- *Brimhana* – nourishment of *Dhatu*
- *Vrsya* – virility promoting
- *Bhaisaja* – quality drugs

Dalhana explain that *Rasayana* process has two distinct but interrelated components – first is *Vayasthapana* (increases healthy life span) and second is *Jaraapharana* (helps in alleviation of senility and maintains youth for a longer time). *Rasayana* drugs act through their intrinsic attributes in terms of *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, *Vipaka* and *Prabhav* with reference to their effects on *SaptDhatu*. So it can conclude that *Rasayana* could act in the following three ways; by evolving vitality, by promoting vitality and by maintaining vitality.

Classification of *Rasayana* –

A. According to place

a) *Kutipravesika* (indoor) – In this method the subject has to remain inside a chamber in isolation. It is suitable for healthy, self controlled, wise, strong and affluent persons.

b) *Vatatpik* (outdoor) – This method is less rigorous and carried out in open air.

B. According to purpose

a) *Kaamyia* (desirable) – It is that which is used for desire of some attainment such as vitality, fortune, intellect etc.

b) *Namitik* (specific) – It is meant for specific disorder like *Kustha*, *Prameha* etc.

c) *Ajasrik* (general) – It is the regular use of nutritious food; like milk, ghee etc.

C. According to modalities –

a) *Achara Rasayana* (behavioural modalities)

b) *Ahara Rasyana* (dietary modalities)

c) *Dravya Rasayana* (drug based modalities)

D. According to *Dravya* –

a) *Dravyabhuta* like *Amlaki*, *Pippali*, *Bala* etc.

b) *Adravyabhuta* like *Achara Rasayana*, *Sadvakya*, *Yoga* etc.

Some *Rasayana* acts on *Jatharagni* and gives strength to *Dhatvagni* and *Bhutagni*. It directly enhances metabolism and body tissue status. After absorption in small intestine some nutrients go into the blood and improve quality of body fluids & other tissues. *Rasayana* also clean our body channels which results in rapid transport of nutrients and adequate nourishment of body tissue. Some herbs directly act on higher brain function; like intellectual power, memory, speech, learning and some increases power of sensory organs. By all these methods *Rasayana* delayed aging. Better results of rejuvenation therapy are gained by following *Achar Rasayana* (a proper behavioural pattern) along with *Rasayana*. *Achar Rasayana* includes speak truth, free from anger, non violence, sweet spoken, abstaining from alcohol, involved in charity & worship, engaged in *Japa* (repeating incantations) & cleanliness, devoted to love & compassion, sleep in balance, regular use of ghee extracted from milk, stay calm, unconceited, well behaved & simple, having senses concentrated to spiritualism, keeping company of elders, positivist, self controlled and devoted to holy scriptures.

Discussion and conclusion

Aging is a natural phenomenon and there is no exact theory of aging in Ayurvedic as well as modern literature. Ayurveda gives attention towards aging process by describing rejuvenation therapy in different modes. Ayurvedic text has clearly mentioned two types of *Jaraa*; *Kalaj* (fixed) and *Akalaj* (early aging). The *Kalaj Jaraa* can't be prevented by drug or any other things but *Akalaj Jaraa* may be prevented by *Rasayana*. The first reason of early aging is our life style. Modulation in life style can prevent early aging but regarding present time we can't change life style after some extent due to our necessities. So to cure early aging and to maintain normal life span Rejuvenation therapy along with

Achar Rasyana is beneficial. Rejuvenation therapy promotes formation of excellent body fluids & tissues and inhibits early aging. Rejuvenation therapy affords a comprehensive physiological and metabolic restoration.

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