Role of Rasayana in Geriatric Care - A Review

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Abstract

The growth of any country or society depends on the number of youth dwelling in that country but according to recent statistical data we soon will have older people more than children and more people at extreme old age than ever before. The number of people aged 65 or older is projected to grow from an estimated 524 million in 2010 to nearly 1.5 billion in 2050. Geriatrics (Jarachikitsa) is the branch of medicine dealing exclusively with the problems of aging and the diseases of elderly. The term Rasayana (rejuvenation) refers to nourishment or nutrition. Rasayana therapy act essentially on nutrition dynamics and rejuvenate the body on both physical and mental levels. The problems of health due to modernization can be solved by increasing resistance against diseases and psychological improvement by implementing Rasayana therapy. Aging (Jara) is one among the Swabhvika Vyadhis. Jara Chikitsa is one among the Astanga of Ayurveda which is specifically dedicated for geriatric care. As per estimation, India currently has around 75 million persons over 65 years. By proper administration of Rasayana therapy as preventive tool one can delay Jara Janita Vyadhis to occur. This paper highlights the role of Rasayana in geriatric care.

Key words: Rasayana, Nutrition, Swabhvika Vyadhis, Geriatric, Modernization.

Introduction

The World is facing a situation without precedent. We soon will have more of older people than children and more people at extreme old age than ever before. The number of people aged 65 or older is projected to grow from an estimated 524 million in 2010 to nearly 1.5 billion in 2050, with most of the increase in developing countries including India. In today’s developing countries chronic non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes reflects changes in lifestyle and diet, as well as aging. Ayurveda the science of life deals mainly with all the aspects of life in relation of health and prevention of disease. So for promotion of life and prevention of disease there are certain codes, conducts and therapies have been mentioned and Rasayana therapy is one among them. Rasayana therapy not only works on physical aspect but also on mental aspect. Geriatrics is a branch of modern medical science which aims at promotion of health by preventing, treating diseases and disabilities in older adults. So to fulfil the aims of geriatrics Rasayana therapy is considered to be the main line of treatment as it prevents most of the geriatric diseases.

Geriatrics in Ayurveda

Geriatrics (Jara Chikitsa) is a branch of medicine dealing exclusively with the problems of aging and the diseases of elderly. It is derived from the Greek root “geron” meaning “old man” and “iatros” meaning “healer”. Aging is characterised by gradual structural changes that occurs with the passage of time, that are
not due to disease. When we look in to Ayurvedic prospective our Acharyas have given prime importance to and considered it one among Astanga Ayurveda.\[3\] Vridhavastha or old age is one who has already attained Vriddhi. Acharya Charaka has considered age above 60 years to be Vridhavastha but Acharya Sushruta and Vagbhata considered it as age more than 70 years which is characterised by diminution of tissues, sense faculties, strength, vitality and diminution in enthusiasm day after day (Hani), person develops wrinkles, grey hairs, baldness, occurrence of secondary disorders such as cough, dyspnoea, inability to perform all activities. As per Acharya Vagbhata, Vata Dosha is predominant in old age and it is also considered as Hani Avastha. So there will be more of catabolic activities taking place in body which further leads to many of the chronic diseases dementia, parkinsonism, hypertension and cerebrovascular diseases etc. By following proper Swasthavritta principles such as Dincharya, Ritucharya, Ratricharya, not supressing Dharniya Vegas and following of Rasayana one can preserve his health and delay the aging related problems.

**Rasayana Therapy**

The word Rasayana derived from root “Rasa” and “Aayana”. Rasa has several meaning such as Rasa Dhatu, Aahara Rasa, Shadrasa etc. But in this context it can be taken as Rasa Dhatu itself and word Aayana means ‘to move’ so it means Rasayana is a dynamic process which nourishes the body from properly formed Dhatus and increases the vital process and prevents the degenerative process. As per Acharya Dalhana, Rasayana is one which leads to continuous nourishment of Rasadi Dhatus there by replenishing them.\[4\] Acharya Sushruta defined Rasayana as Vyayasthapaka which retards aging process (increases longevity of life).\[5\] As per Acharya Sharangdhar Rasayana can be defined as the one which cures diseases arising due to old age.\[6\] Acharya Charaka has given prime importance to Rasayana and described it in an elaborate fashion, the properties of Rasayana which Acharya Charaka has mentioned are Rasayana is one which increases longevity, which increases Smriti, Medha, and one which helps in maintaining health (Arogya), maintains youthfulness, which enhances Prabha, Varna, etc.\[7\]

**Classification of Rasayana**


Rasayana is Primarily divided into two types:-

a) Dravyabhuta Rasayana
b) Adravyabhutas Rasayana (Achara Rasayana)

(I) As per method of use \[8\]

a) Kuti Praveshika (in door use)
b) Vatatapika (out door use)

(II) As per Scope of use \[9\]

a) Kamya Rasayana (promotor of normal health)
   i. Prana Kamya (promotes longevity)
   ii. Medha Kamya (improves mental faculties)
   iii. Shri Kamya (improves lustre of body)
b) Naimittika Rasayana
c) Ajasrika Rasayana

(III) According to Prabhava (Effect)

Dalhana mentions two types of Rasayana in Sarvopaghata Shamaniya chapter of Chikitsasthana, a) Samshodhana Rasayana

b) Samshamana Rasayana.

**Mode of Action**

As per our classics Rasayana therapy works on Agni which inturn leads to proper formation of Rasadi Dhatus, Hence responsible for creation of Ojas which is considered as prime essence of these Rasadi Dhatus.\[10\] Which is responsible for proper working of immune system of body in terms of Vyadhi Kshamatva, Hence Rasayana plays a crucial role in prevention of aging and old age related disorders. It also enhances bodily strength and mental faculties. Different classics of Ayurveda have defined Rasayana in different words but in same central theme. The probable mode of action of Rasayana therapy as per contemporary science is as follows,

1. Antioxidant action – Amalaki.
2. Immunomodulatory action – Guduchi.
3. Haematopoietic effect – Amalaki, Bhringaraja, Mandura, Lauha Bhasma.
5. Antiaging action – Ashwagandha, Bala.

**DISCUSSION**

Ayurveda gives importance for geriatric care, as it is one among the branch of Astanga of Ayurveda. Jara Chikitsa has a good scope in present day scenario as a preventive tool. As mentioned earlier the qualities of Rasayana therapy are one which enhances the longevity, one which enhances Smriti, Medha, which maintains Aarogyata, and also maintains youthfulness etc. In order to counter act the Jara Lakshana and Jarajanita Vyadhis one has to follow Rasayana therapy on daily basis which inturn leads to good qualitative life. Acharya Sharanagdha has mentioned the Hani (ruination) in accordance to decades of life, One can minimise the ill effect of Hani by utilizing the drugs in accordance with decades of life mentioned in table 1.

**Table 1: Rasayanas indicated in various decades of life**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Decades Of Life</th>
<th>Indicated Rasayana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Balyam</td>
<td>Childhood</td>
<td>Vacha, Swarna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vriddhi</td>
<td>Growth &amp; Development</td>
<td>Kashmari, Bala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chavi</td>
<td>Luster/Complexion</td>
<td>Amalaki, Lauha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Medha</td>
<td>Sharpness in perception</td>
<td>Shankhapushpi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Twak</td>
<td>Skin &amp; Appendages</td>
<td>Bhringraj, Jyotishmati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Drishti</td>
<td>Visual Acuity</td>
<td>Triphala, Shatavari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Shukra</td>
<td>Potency &amp; Fertility</td>
<td>Atmagupta, Ashwagandha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vikram</td>
<td>Valour</td>
<td>Amalaki, Bala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Buddhi</td>
<td>Cumulative,Intel &amp; Cognitive functioning</td>
<td>Brahmi, Mandukaparni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Karmendriya</td>
<td>Physical capacities</td>
<td>Bala, Ashwagandha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The herbs which have been mentioned in table no. 1, have specific action on factors for which they have mentioned, for example - Somaraji has Krimighna, Kusthaghna property etc. and it has very good effects in Tvak Rogas, Bhringraj has almost same qualities along with Rasoyana effects too. Amalaki is a very good source of Vitamin C and has antioxidant properties and in our classics it has been metioned as Chakshusya also hence it counteract the damage done to eyes and vision by age related degeneration, in same manner Kapikachu has aphrodisiac property so it protects against Shukra Dhatu Kshaya. Hence these drugs have critically analysed and mentioned in
specific age group as to overcome the specific age related situations.

CONCLUSION
As the prime aim of Ayurveda is Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshnam (maintaining the health of a healthy individual). So to maintain the healthy state of a person one should follow the Swasthayvrritta principles. Rasayana therapy is one among them, in present world persons follow sedentary life style and faulty food habits which is the main cause for metabolic imbalance which leads to aging to start early than its schedule. These Rasayana therapies are critically analysed by our Acharyas. Therefore persons desirous of attaining long life, vitality and happiness should practise Rasayana therapy with complete devotion according to the prescribed procedure.

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How to cite this article: Mishra Yagyik, Negalur Vijay, Thakor Krunal, Bhat Nagaraj, Shubhasri B. Role of Rasayana in Geriatric Care - A Review. J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci 2016;1(1):52-55. http://dx.doi.org/10.21760/jaims.v1i1.3636

Source of Support: Nil, Conflict of Interest: None declared.