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A review on role of *Rasayana* in *Akalaja Jara*

Nikhila P¹, Nimisha KV², Ranjitha³

^{1,2}Post Graduate Scholar, Dept. of Roganidana, Govt. Ayurveda Medical College, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.

³HOD, Dept. of Roganidana, Govt. Ayurveda Medical College, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a science of life, which aims at prevention as well as curing of the diseases. The ultimate aim of human is to attain health and longevity of life. In present era due to the change in lifestyle, a busy life schedule, there is an increase in stress, anxiety and depression among the people. According to WHO, 60% of related factors to individual health and quality of life are related to lifestyle. In this busy life people either take proper food or at proper time, having disturbed sleep, lack of exercise, sedentary life style all these things ultimately lead to the physical and mental disturbances, anxiety and nutritional deficiency which in turn leads to numerous health issues. Unhealthy lifestyle leads to metabolic diseases, joint and skeletal problems, cardio-vascular diseases, hypertension, overweight, violence and so on. Along with this smoking, alcohol consumption, drug abuse also has a major harmful impact on health. All of these contribute to the aging. Aging is an unavoidable and natural phenomenon of life. But one's aging process is accelerated than the expected nature of the chronological age. *Akalaja Jara* or premature aging is strongly influenced by the effects of environmental, lifestyle, and disease states that, in turn, are related to or change with aging but are not due to aging itself. Our *Acharyas* have explained the concept of *Rasayana*, which is also one among the eight branches of *Ayurveda*, has a major role to play in the *Akalajajara* due to modernization and will be explained in detail.

Key words: Aging, *Akalaja Jara*, lifestyle, premature aging

INTRODUCTION

The word *Rasayana* which means that which helps the *Rasa Raktadi Dhatus* to reach their destination proper. *Chakrapani* defines *Rasayana* as the therapy that cures the disease as well as *Jara*, apart from this *Bhavaprakash* and *Yoga ratnakara* explains it as that one which eliminates diseases and acts as *Vayahsthambakara*, *Bheshaja*, *Chakshushya*, *Brumhana* and *Vrushya*. Aging has been defined as a progressive and generalized impairment of function

resulting in a loss of adaptive response to stress and in a growing risk of age-associated disease.^[1] It is an involuntary and natural phase. In *Ayurveda* ageing is defined as '*Jara*'. *Jara* word derived from root "*Jrush Vayohanau*" explained as "*Vayah Krita Slathamamsady Avastha*" meaning loosening of muscle and other tissues under the influence of ageing.^[2] If the changes occur according to *Kala* it's called as *Kalaja Jara*, if it occurs before normal *Kala* it is called as *Akalaja Jara*.^[3] *Akalaja Jara* is an unnatural and untimely process, occurring ahead of time, where in it can be prevented and also reversed by following the principles of *Ayurveda*.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the cause of the *Akalaja Jara*
2. To analyse the role of *Rasayana* in the prevention of *Akalaja Jara*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article is based on a review of Ayurvedic texts. Materials related to concept of geriatrics, premature

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Nikhila P

Post Graduate Scholar, Dept. of Roganidana, Govt. Ayurveda Medical College, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.

E-mail: nikhilanikhi2016@gmail.com

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aging, *Rasayana* therapy and other relevant topics have been collected from the different *Samhitas* and various online journals. All the search results are obtained and compiled thoroughly for better understanding.

Vaya (Age) in Ayurveda

In *Ayurveda* human life span is divided into 3 *Avasthas* as *Bala*, *Madhyama* and *Vrdhha* or *Jeerna Avastha*. The *Vrdhha Avastha* is the last phase of life, where in *Dhatu Kshaya* takes place, followed by degeneration of the body.

Table 1: Classification of Vaya

Acharyas	Balya Avstha	Madhyama Avastha	Vrdhha Avastha
Charaka	1-30 Yrs	30 - 60 Yrs	60 - 100 Yrs
Sushutha	1-16 Yrs	16- 70yrs	70- 100 Yrs
Ashtanga Sangraha	1-16 Yrs	16-70 Yrs	70-100 Yrs
Ashtanga Hridaya	1-16 Yrs	16- 60 Yrs	60-100 Yrs
Kashyapa	1-16 Yrs - <i>Bala</i> 16-34 Yrs- Yuva	34- 70 Yrs	70- 100 Yrs

Here *Jara* has been divided into *Kalaja* and *Akalaja Jara*.

Kalaja Jara: is one where in the signs and symptoms of aging occurs at a proper time in *Vrdhha Avastha*. It is *Swabhavaja* and it can be regarded as the chronological ageing where in *Dhatu Kshaya* occurs and is said as *Parirakshanakruta*. The symptoms of ageing as follows *Vali* (wrinkles), *Palitya* (grey hair), *Khalitya* (hair fall), *Shukra Apravartanam* (loss of libido), *Ojakshaya*, *Mansa Saithilya*, *Asamartha Chesta*, *Analpmeda*, *Raktavidah*. *Medhahani* (Loss of Grasping power), *Avasannata* and *Nairasya* (Depression), *Smritihani* (Loss of Recall power), *Utsahahani* (Decreased Enthusiasm), *Buddhihani* (Deterioration in Wisdom).^[4]

Akalaja Jara: The signs and symptoms of *Jara* which occurs before the stipulated time is known as *Akalaja Jara*. It is called as "*Aparirakshanakruta*" which occurs by following the improper lifestyle. In modern *Akalaja Jara* can be taken as premature aging. Premature aging is when the signs of aging occur earlier than is standard. More scientifically, premature aging happens when a person's biological age is older than their chronological age.

According to *Rasaratna samuchchaya* causes of *Akalaja Jara* as follows:^[5]

1. *Panthanamatigamana* i.e., excessive walking
2. *Atisheetha sevana* i.e., excessive cold intake
3. *Kadanna sevana* i.e., unwholesome food
4. *Vrudhhoanganasatatasanga* i.e., excessive indulgence in sex with elderly women
5. *Manapratikula* i.e., mental stress.

The other etiological factors have been said in our classics for *Akalaja Jara* which can be taken as *Aharaja Nidana*, *Viharaja Nidana* and *Mansika Nidanasa*.

Aharaja Nidana

Excessive indulgence in intake of particular *Rasa* only. i.e.,

Lavana Rasa^[6] - Greying of hair, baldness, wrinkles, loosening of tooth

Amla Rasa^[7] - Does the *Shithilikarana* of *Kaya*

Tikta Rasa^[8] - Decreases strength

Kashaya Rasa^[9] - Does the *Karshana* of *Deha*

Katu Rasa^[10] - Decreases strength

Acharya Charaka in *Rasa Vimana Adyaya* has explained not to take 3 things excessively which are *Pippali*, *Kshara*, and *Lavana*. He explained that excessive intake of *Lavana* can lead to *Shithila Mamsa shonita*, *Aparikleshah*, *Akala Kalitya*, *Palitya* and *Valaya*. Along with this not taking the food as per *Ashta Vidha Aharaayatana*, excessive intake of *Viruddha Ahara* also has a major role to play. In the present lifestyle people knowingly or unknowingly are habituated to all the

above said *Nidanas* and are prone to different lifestyle disorders along with the premature aging.

Viharaja Nidana: As said earlier, excessive walking, day sleep, excessive indulgence in sex and improper exercise etc. can be taken.

Manasika Nidanas: Imbalance in *Manasika Bhavas* like *Kama Krodha Bhaya Lobha* etc. and person will not consume or consume less amount of food where in *Dhatu Poshana* doesn't takes place. Even the wholesome food also taken in proper quantity, does not get digested due to anxiety, grief, fear, anger etc. psychological emotions. Gradually it will lead to *Dhatu Kshaya* and symptoms like debility, lethargy, incapability to concentrate, loss of enthusiasm etc. may appear which can be correlated to *Akaalaja Jara*.

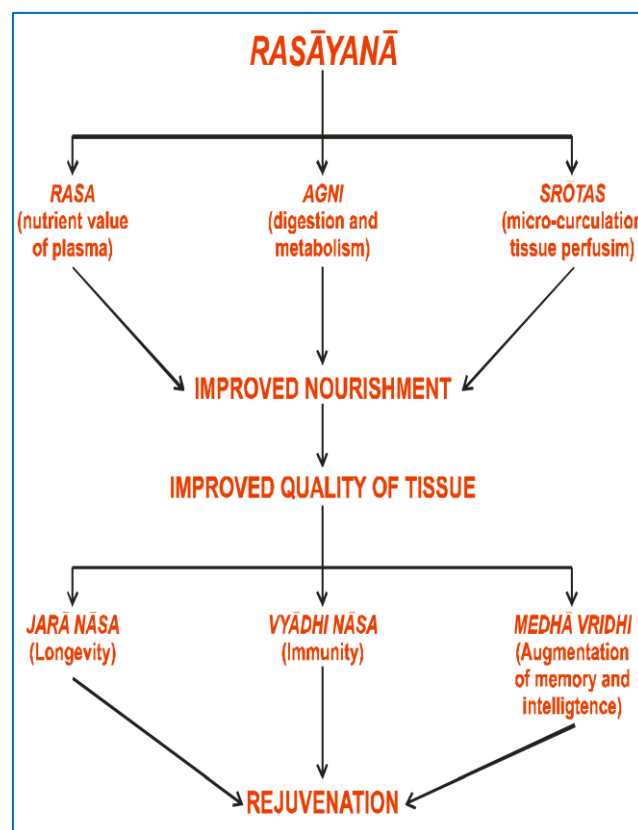
Rasayana

The word *Rasa* is derived from *Rasagatou Dhatu Aharahar Gachhati Iti Rasa*, and *Ayana* which means *Iyate Anena Iti Ayanam*. In our classics various definition of *Rasyana* has been given by our *Acharyas* which are as follows, *Acharya Charaka* has given more importance to *Rasayana*, he explains it as one which increases longevity, *Smriti*, *Medha*, and one which helps in maintaining health, maintains youthfulness, which enhances *Prabha*, *Varna*,^[11] etc. *Acharya Sushruta* defined *Rasayana* as *Vayasthapaka* which retards aging process i.e., increases longevity of life. *Acharya Dalhana*, *Rasayana* is one which leads to continuous nourishment of *Rasadi Dhatus* there by replenishing them. As per *Acharya Sharangdhar* *Rasayana* can be defined as the one which cures diseases arising due to old age. In total the word "*Rasayana*" means the way for attaining excellent *Rasadi Dhatus*. The improved nutritional status and the better qualities of *Dhatus* lead to a series of secondary attributes of *Rasayana*, which bestow longevity, impart strength, *Ojabala* etc.

Action of Rasayana

Rasayana mainly acts on the *Agni*, *Srotas* and on *Dhatus*. Results in healthy tissues and development in the body, ultimately it leads to the long life, immunity, strength, happiness and intellect promotion. All these

improvements which can be considered as anti-aging effect.



There's a unique concept in *Ayurveda* known as *Achara rasayana*, which is explained by *Acharya Charaka*.^[12] *Achara Rasayana* is a right code of socio-behavioral conduct; it teaches us a proper lifestyle, what all things to do and not to do. In other words following proper *Achara* and *Vichara* is nothing but *Achara Rasayana*. *Achara Rasayana* plays a key role in maintaining the equilibrium state of mankind. By following some rules and regulations complete physical, mental and social wellbeing can be obtained.

Person who are truthful and devoid of anger, free from alcohol, and sexual indulgence, who do not indulge violence or exertion, who are peaceful and pleasant in their speech, who practice *Japa* (incantation) and cleanliness, who are *Dhira* (steady and stable), who practice charity and penance, who offer prayers to god, cow, knowledgeable persons and old people, who are free from barbarous act, who are compassionate, whose period of sleep and awaking are regular, who habitually take milk and ghee, who knows the country and time, free from ego, follow good conduct, not

narrow minded, have love for spiritual knowledge, have excellent sense organs, who have reverence for seniors and self-control, who regularly study scriptures; it also called *Nityarasayana*, by practicing it individual get all benefits of *Rasayana*, good health and better life and definitely get long life span or longevity.^[13]

A careful analysis of qualities of *Achara Rasayana* reveal that most of them are related with *Mana, Dhi, Dhriti* along with good conduct and these results in maximum benefit.

Satyavadinam and Akrodanam

The person should be truthfull and free from anger. If the person doesn't follow it and will be subjected to acute stress. Acute stress is known to negatively affect neuroendocrine function via hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. When stimulated this feedback loop results in the secretion sustained during chronic stress of glucocorticoids such as cortisol, enabling, the organism to perform with a heightened sense of alertness. The HPA response to stress is a basic adaptive mechanism in mammals. Hippocampal volume loss is well documented in normal and pathological aging.^[14]

Ahimsaka, Anayasam, Prashantha, Priyavadinam

The person should be non violent, calm and affectionate to others, should speak good words which makes him to live a contemplated and happy life free from stress. Person should avoid extraneous work this may cause *Dhatukshya* (depletion of tissues due lack of nutrition value) and reduce immune response of that individual.

Japa Shouchaparadeeram

Japa is a state of absolute physical and mental relaxation. Daily indulging in the meditation, calms the mind, increases the co-ordination between mind and heart and releases the stress. Cleanliness of one self and the surrounding environment and having patience will altogether gives us the positive attitude to lead the life and free from negative things and remain stress free.

Samajagaraswapna

The persons whose sleep wake cycle is fixed in a regular routine as said in our classics will remain healthy by keeping the neuroendocrine system in balance. The effect of ageing on the performance of the circadian system has been known for many years, recent data show that a dysfunctional circadian clock can in turn contribute to ageing and pathologies associated with old age.

Nitya Ksheera Grta Ashniyam

Ksheera and *Grta* are considered as *Satvika Ahara*, daily consumption will lead to increase in the *Ojas* in the body. It also increases the quality of *Rasa* and also acts as *Nitya Rasayana*.

DISCUSSION

Ageing is a natural phenomenon, but nobody wants early aging. *Rasayana* is the only mode to prevent it. Most of the symptoms of *Akalaja Jara* like *Vali, Palitya* etc. are caused mainly due to the improper quality of *Rasa Dhatu*. As we know the *Nirukti* of *Rasayana* which states that, that which nourishes the *Rasadi Dhatu*s and keeps the person healthy both physically and mentally. Now-a-days faulty dietary habits, lifestyle, and stressful living is having a wrong influence on one's own biological aging which is the sole indicator of health and age-associated diseases. *Achara Rasayana* explained in *Ayurveda* plays a prominent role to lead a stress-free life and stay balanced mentally and physically. By following this *Dosha, Dhatu, Mala* and *Agni* will be balanced in the body. The objective to attain healthy aging could be achieved by practicing stress-free lifestyle enriched with moral code of conducts and healthy dietary habits to make the society healthy and happy.

CONCLUSION

Akalaja Jara can be prevented by following a stress-free healthy lifestyle. To lead such life, one has to adopt the principles of *Ayurveda* which are following the proper daily regimens, seasonal regimens and code of conduct. Implementing *Achara Rasayana* in our life will enhance the quality of living and even people attain

longevity and will be free from diseases and it is one of the cost-effective treatments which everyone can follow in their lives.

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