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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 *Swabhavika 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, *Swabhavika 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,^[1] 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.^[2] 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

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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 *Vridhhi*. *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 suppressing *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 *Dhatu*s and increases the vital process and prevents the degenerative process. As per *Acharya Dalhana*, *Rasayana* is one which leads to continuous nourishment of *Rasadi Dhatu*s there by replenishing them.^[4] *Acharya Sushruta* defined *Rasayana* as *Vayasthapaka* 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

Classification of *Rasayana* by Sharma A.K. and Singh R.H. 1992.

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) *Kamyas Rasayana* (promotor of normal health)
 - i. *Prana Kamyas* (promotes longevity)
 - ii. *Medha Kamyas* (improves mental faculties)
 - iii. *Shri Kamyas* (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*.

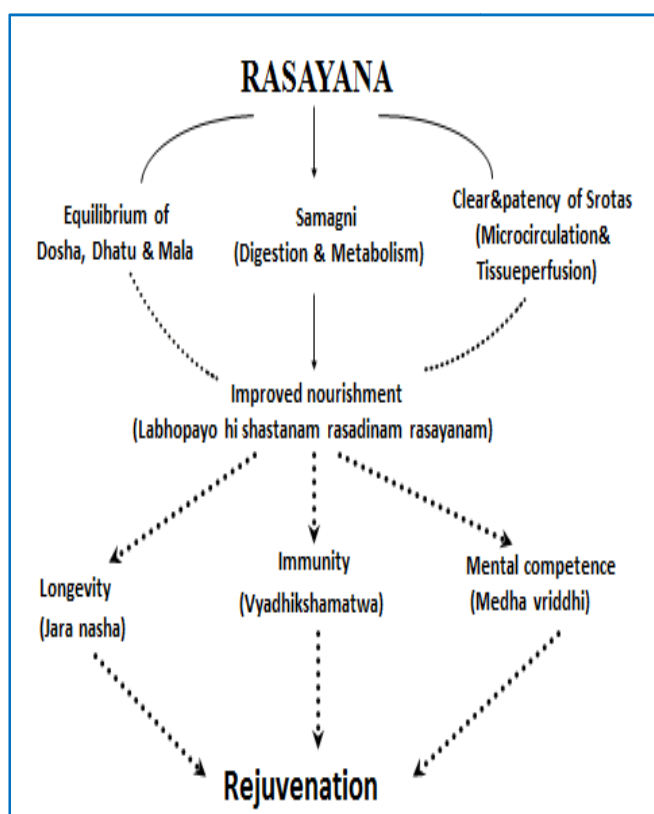
Mode of Action

As per our classics *Rasayana* therapy works on *Agni* which inturn leads to proper formation of *Rasadi Dhatu*s, Hence responsible for creation of *Ojas* which is considered as prime essence of these *Rasadi Dhatu*s.^[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*.
4. Adaptogenic action- *Ashwagandha*.
5. Antiaging action – *Ashwagandha, Bala*.
6. Anabolic action – *Vidarikanda*.
7. Nutritive function – *Gritha, Ksheera*.
8. Neuroprotective action – *Ashwagandha, Swarna Bhasma, Rajata Bhasma*.



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 *Smiriti*, *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 Sharngdhara* 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

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

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*, *Bhringaraja* has also almost same qualities along with *Rasayana* effects too. *Amalaki* is a very good source of Vitamin C and has antioxidant properties and in our classics it has been mentioned as *Chakshusya* also hence it conteract 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 *Swasthavritta* 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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