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A Conceptual Study on Role of *Rasayana* in Geriatric Health Care.

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ABSTRACT:

Introduction -Aging refers to degeneration at tissue level. It leads to a gradual decrease in physical and mental capacity. The concept of anti-aging is described in *Ayurveda* as *Rasayana*, which aims at maintaining excellent physical and mental health in old age through a combination of nourishing diet, wholesome activities and gentle herbs.

Material & methods –All classical texts and modern texts including paper, articles were reviewed.

Results-The fundamental tissues like *Dhātu*, *Agni*, *Srotas* etc. of human body leading to prevention of aging, improvement in bodily strength, mental ability and hence providing resistance against diseases. One can attain not only longevity alone through *Rasayana* but also memory, intelligence, youthfulness, excellence of lusture, complexion, mastery over phonetics, resistance and immunity against diseases.

Discussion- As elderly people are more susceptible to several chronic diseases also, therefore it is need of study on *rasayana* therapy for improving the expectancy and quality of life in geriatric health.

Keywords- *Rasayana*, *Dhatukshyaya*, *Agni*, *Vridhaavastha*.

INTRODUCTION

Aging is characterized by a progressive loss of physiological entity, leading to impaired function and increased vulnerability to death. This deterioration is the primary risk factor for major human pathologies including cancer, diabetes, cataract, cardiovascular disorders and neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer disease (AD) and Parkinson disease (PD). One in ten individuals aged ≥65 years has AD and its prevalence continues to increase with increasing age.¹ In addition to it, due to the demographic transition, rapid industrialization and urbanization, westernization of Indian culture and disintegration of joint or extended family structures will leads to nuclear ones² causing psychological stress in elderly people. Several concepts including cellular and

molecular basis, network theory, theory of ageing has been given to enlighten the changes observed during ageing.³ *Ayurveda* also considers elderly people having debridement of *dhatu* (tissue).⁴ So in order to keep *dhatu* in its equilibrium state, age specific *rasayana* & specified *panchkarma* therapeutics as well as yoga or self care may be integrated in their lifestyle.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ayurvedic texts including *Charak*, *Sushruta* and *Ashtanga Hridaya samhita* are considered and equated for complete analysis of *doshas* which causes disease in old age and *Rasayana* ,as a solution for the debility caused by those *doshas*, has been reviewed thoroughly with modern



medical science literature, journals, previous research articles.

Literature review

Concept of Vridhavastha and Doshavastha-Acharya *Sushruta* gives an elaborate and systemic classification of age, where he described old age as above 70 years⁵. On the other hand *Acharya Charaka* mentioned old age as 60 years above.⁶

Acharya Sushruta has defined health as a state of *samya*/equilibrium of *doshas, dhatus, agni and malas* along with mental and spiritual well being. In addition every living organisms has to undergo through three phases in his life span with predominance of *vata, pitta, kaphadoshas* in *vridhayuva, baalyaavastha* respectively. *Vata*, which is drying and decaying force and the predominant *dosha* in *vridhaavastha*⁷ (old age) Predominance of *vata* in body will leads to *balabhransha* (depletion or loss of immunity), *nidrabhranshas* (reduced or loss of sleep) and *indriyabhransha*⁸ (improper or loss of functioning of sensory organs) Beside this *Acharya charak* states *vayu* is *ayu* and *bala* of body. *Prakupitavata* in old age may cause decay of *bala, varna, and ayu*.⁹ With the advancing age, the depleted *agni* leads to decrease in the vigor and vitality with decay and atrophy due to defective metabolism. Along with this there is gradual decline of all the *dhatu* (tissue), *virya* (potency), *indriya* (sensory organ), *ojas, bala* (strength) and *utsaha* (enthusiasm) along with loss of hair, wrinkling of skin, chronic and recurrent cough, shortness of breath, inability to perform regular activities.¹⁰ *Sharangdhar* describe a unique scheme of biological ageing in ten decade frame speculating the specific sequential loss of certain bio values specific to respective decades of life.¹¹

Physiological changes in old age¹²-Ageing is *svabhavajanyavyadhi*¹³ i.e. inherent nature of the living being to get old, thus during this period body undergoes progressive involution and decay physically as well as mentally which can be summarized as follows-

- 1) Cardiac reserve decreases
- 2) Lung vital capacity get reduced
- 3) Creatinine clearance decreases
- 4) Loss of muscle mass
- 5) Altered motility patterns of GI system
- 6) Enlargement of the prostate
- 7) Impaired Glucose Homeostasis

All these physiological changes along with mental changes will cause certain diseases like hypertension,

atherosclerosis, diabetes mellitus, BPH, Osteoporosis, dementia and depression. According to the World Health Organization, dementia and depression are the most prevalent mental and neurological conditions in the elderly.

Rasayana—A Treasure Of Ayurveda Although ageing is a natural inevitable phenomenon but *rasayana* therapy can be incorporated in order to slow down the progression of decay. *Ayurveda*, the science of life and longevity has been practiced in India since inception in an *ashtanga* form through its eight special branches. *Rasayana tantra*, one of the eight branches is not merely includes any remedy but routine positive life style in the form of *achararasayana* optimal diet, herbs and minerals too. *Yajjaravyadinashanama tad rasayanam*¹⁴ i.e. *rasayana* will help to attain longevity by curing disease. It also plays a preventive role against all diseases through improved immunity. *Rasayana* is the way of attaining excellent *ras* and other *dhatu*¹⁵ As per *Acharyasushruta*, a measure which enhance longevity, intellect, strength or immunity and cures the disease too is known as *rasayana*.

Mode of action of Rasayana¹⁶-

Rasayana performs its action by directly acting as a nutrient and enriches *poshakarasa* i.e. nutrient rich plasma. By aggravating the *agni* i.e. biofire system, *rasayana* helps in promoting nutrition through enhancing metabolism of the body. Also, through acting on *strotasa* and induces inner transport system.

As many *rasayanas* are mentioned in our texts under the name of *kamya, naimitika* and *ajasrikarasayana*.¹⁷ Changes observed in old age are at tissue level as well as at organ level. So *Rasayana* can be instituted depending upon the need and feasibility of the person. Although *rasayana* in general is a holistic restorative and rejuvenative modality one can visualize some *rasayana* approach for promotion and protection of certain specific tissues and organ. Concept of disease specific *rasayana* therapy has been projected by *Acharya Sushruta* and commentator *Dalhana* under the name of *naimitikarasayanai. evyadhinimita rasayana* namely *shilajit* and *tuvrakaraayana* for *prameha* (diabetes) and *kushtha* (leprosy). Few more disease specific and organ specific *rasayana* drugs can be used for promotion of health in old age which are summarized as below¹⁸-

DISCUSSION

Ageing is a natural phenomenon for every living organism.

Physiological changes observed with ageing in the form of decrease in cardiac reserve, less blood flow to cerebrum, impaired glucose homeostasis or many more. *Ayurveda* also considers these debridement at organ as well as *dhatu*(tissue) level. Hence with the ageing, older individuals represent multiple chronic conditions and heterogeneous group that is challenging to treat and whose disease burden is difficult to characterize with a common metric. Being a heterogeneous group, simple & specific solutions will not help us to achieve appropriate solution for them. Therefore combination of medicines targeted to specific disease should be given. Hence this study was done to analyze age related physiological debridement in the form of physical as well as psychological. Planning age specific *rasayana*, disease specific diet and yoga will provide older individuals a healthy and better life against this bereavement. Although ageing is inevitable, but it can be regressed or reserved to some extent by incorporating *Ayurvedic* modulations in the form of *rasayana* therapy, *panchkarma*, dietetics, yoga and *ayurvedic* life style.

CONCLUSION

Healthful longevity has ever been the cherished desire of man. Man finds the real pleasure of life with full of activity in young age. *Acharya Sushruta* has beautifully defined the old age by giving it a simile of decaying old house which may collapse during rainy season.¹⁹ Hence declining tissues of the aged persons are unable to tolerate the physical, environmental and mental pressure. Planning age specific *rasayana* will also help to restore the likely losses of particular decade. As aged persons require more attention and care which will be possible only by following *Rasayana* therapy alone or in combination with proper diet planning, practicing yoga *Vyayama* and *Achara Rasayana*. In addition Government of India has also launched a national campaign to popularize the strength of *Ayurveda* and Yoga in geriatric health care. Though it is a conceptual study but the information provided can be used for further experimental and clinical study.

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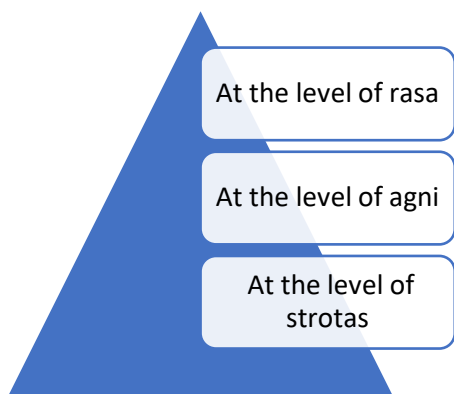


Table 1 Represents Treatment

	Disease	Suggested <i>Naimitka Rasayana</i>	Specified area	Suggested <i>Rasayana</i>
i.	Diabetes mellitus	<i>Shilajita, Haridra</i>	<i>Medhyarasayana</i>	<i>Brahmi,sankhpushpi,mandu kaparni</i>
ii.	Hypertension	<i>SarpagandhaArjuna</i>	<i>Hridyarasayana</i>	<i>Arjuna&pushkarmoola</i>
iii.	Neurodegeneration	<i>BrahmiAshwagandha</i>	<i>Chakshushyarasayana</i>	<i>Triphala, jyotishamati</i>
iv.	Arthritis	<i>Bhallataka,Guggulu</i>	<i>Kanthyarasayana</i>	<i>Vacha, yashtimadhu</i>
v.	Dementia	<i>Brahmi,shankhpushhi</i>	<i>Nasyarasayana</i>	<i>Apamarga ,katphala</i>