

## BLISSFUL AGEING THROUGH AYURVEDA

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### ABSTRACT

Every creature on earth is in constant search of happiness and pleasure. Ageing is a part of life, and contrary to common belief, old age is not necessarily painful if one lives it with liveliness and wisdom, and as everyone has to travel the path of aging to reach *Moksha* which is ultimate of human birth. Ayurveda ancient science of life and medicine described *JaraChikitsa* as one of the fundamental branch, specifically to improve the quality of psychosomatic health of old aged individual and to attain the *Moksha* with ease and comfort. Popularly *JaraChikitsa* is also known as *RasayanaChikitsa*. Rasayana focuses on psychosomatic health of individual through the repairing, restoration, and rejuvenation of body tissue and soundness of mental status. Use of health diet regime, internal medicines and following of social customs, healthy family relation and social milieu are the corner stones for traveling the path of blissful ageing. *Rasayana* diet like regular use of *Ksheera* (Cow's milk) and *Ghrita* (Cows Ghee), *Rasayana* medicines like *Chyavanaprasha* and following of *AcharaRasyana* to maintain healthy family relation and social milieu are fundamentals of Ayurveda *JaraChikitsa*. With the use of these regimes ancient Ayurveda Acharyas had lived very fruitful and blissful life. This presentation is an attempt to highlight the role of Ayurveda *JaraChikitsa* or *RasyanaChikitsa* for blissful aging in today's stressful era where ageing is considered as dissolution and perturbing.

**Key Words:** Ayurveda, Ageing, Blissful, *JaraChikitsa*, *Rasyana*

**INTRODUCTION:** The whole universe consists of animate and inanimate things. Animate depict the sign of life while inanimate do not show any evidence of life. Life is a transformation from one stage to another. *Kala* or time is the crucial factor in this transformation. Ayurveda ancient science of life, defines the *Ayu* or life as the integration of *Sharira* (Physical body), *Indriya* (Senses), *Sattva* (Mind), and *Aatma* (Soul)<sup>i</sup>. Life is sustained only when there is uninterrupted integration of all these factors and death occurs whenever there is disintegration of any of the above factor. Therefore it is very clear that, life is maintenance and time bound phenomenon. Time is very crucial factor

and Ayurveda defines the *Ayu* as well as age as the time dependent. Age is defined as the change in the state of physical and mental status of human being over a period of time. As time advances there is change in the body tissues and mental status of individual which can be called as ageing<sup>ii</sup>. Advancement in age or ageing is characterized by derangements in the functional capacity and anatomical structures of different body tissues and hence ultimately there is suboptimal functioning of different organs. Whenever the suboptimal functioning is going on there is complete loss of the functions of different systems or multiple systemic failures. Multiple system failure is the end

stage of life and there is death of individual. Right from birth to death there is variation in the rate of anabolic and catabolic process of body. Increased rate of catabolism over anabolism is the basic

cause of derangement in the functions of organ and the process of ageing. This process of ageing reflects in the form of changes in the body structure and loss of function of individual.

**TABLE 1 – EFFECT OF AGEING ON DIFFERENT ORGANS AND GERIATRIC DISEASES<sup>iii</sup>**

ORGAN	AGEING CHANGES	AGE RELATED DISEASES
Brain and neuron	Atrophy	Alzheimer disease
Retina	Atrophy or detachments	Retinopathy and ARMD
Eye Lens	Dystrophy	Cataract
Cornea	Corneal degeneration	Corneal opacities
Hair cells of cochlea	Degeneration	Deafness
Teeth	Fall	Dental fall
Lungs	Dysplasia	Lung cancer
Heart	Degeneration	Coronary artery diseases, myocardial infarction, hypertension
Liver	Degeneration and dyslipidemic changes	Liver cirrhosis, Liver failure, Liver Cell carcinoma, Chronic liver diseases
Pancreas	Degeneration, dysplasia	Pancreatic cancer, pancreatic fatty changes
Intestine	Degeneration, and atrophy	Malabsorption and carcinomatous changes
Kidneys	Degeneration, poor renal function	Chronic Renal Failure, Renal Cell Carcinoma, Renal hypo functioning
Bladder and prostate	Degeneration, and atrophy	Cystic cancer, BPH
Hairs	Degeneration, and atrophy	Loss and graying
Skin	Degeneration	Wrinkles and collagen diseases
Bones	Degeneration	Bone denervation, age related fractures
Muscles	Degeneration	Muscle degeneration, atrophy
Ligaments and tendons	Degeneration	Ligaments degeneration, atrophy

**AYURVEDA VIEW:** According to Ayurveda the human body consist of *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* as three *Dosha* (humor), *Rasa*, *Rakta Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja* and *Shukra* as *Sapta Dhatu* (building blocks of human body), and *Purisha*, *Mootra*, and *Sweda* as three *Mala* (waste products)<sup>iv</sup>.

Whenever there is harmony among all these thirteen factors, all body physiological processes functions occurs in regular manner. Different physiological processes of life consist of the construction or anabolism and destruction or catabolism of body tissues i.e. cellular or tissue metabolism, which in turn regulates the life span of all different body tissues. Tissue or cellular metabolism is under direct control of digestion. Hence, as per Ayurveda in order to maintain the all basic physiological and biochemical processes, one has to maintain digestion. Concept of digestion is described in Ayurveda as the concept of *Agni*<sup>v</sup>. *Agni* is a very broad concept covering wide terms like *Jatharagni*, *Panchabhutagni*, and *Dhatvagni*. Concept of *Jatharagni* is concerned with the digestion, absorption and assimilation of food from gastrointestinal tract. While concept of *Panchabhutagni* is concerned with the differentiation in the digestion of different food stuffs like proteins into amino acids, carbohydrate into glucose and concept of *Dhatvagni* is concerned with the tissue metabolism in different body tissues like blood cells, muscle cells, chondrocytes, sperms, ovum etc. All the above function in harmonized manner with negative feedback mechanism and ultimately control the tissue metabolism, so that there is optimum functioning of all body tissues and organs to maintain health and longevity of individual.

As per Ayurveda in the process of digestion there is formation of *Ahara Rasa* from digested food which is absorbed from intestines and there is sequential formation of *Sharira Dhatu* like *Rasa Dhatu*, *Rakta Dhatu*, *Mamsa Dhatu*, *Meda Dhatu*, *Asthi Dhatu*, *Majja Dhatu*, and *Shukra Dhatu* and finally there is formation of *Oja*<sup>vi</sup>, essence of all *Sapta Dhatu*. *Oja* is considered as factor responsible for immunity, strength, complexion and longevity of an individual. Hence, if the process of formation of all *Dhatu* is uninterrupted there is maintenance of *Oja*, health and longevity of person. If one takes healthy diet with healthy diet habits, one will have good digestion and formation of healthy tissues. As explained earlier, sequential transformation of *Sharira Dhatu* starts up with formation of *Rasa Dhatu* which is very first *Dhatu* in human body to be formed. *Rasa Dhatu* contains all the essential nutrients to nourish and produce rest of *Dhatu* (*Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja*, and *Shukra*) and hence also called as *Adya Dhatu* in Ayurveda. Therefore, if there is lack of nutrients or vitiation of *Rasa Dhatu* there is disturbance in the metabolism of rest of *Dhatu*. Considering this fact Ayurveda Acharya have focused on the purity and nourishment of *Rasa Dhatu* to maintain the health and longevity of individual. The healthier state and life span of *Rasa Dhatu* is dependent on the state of *Agni*. As time passes the *Agni* gets weaker over a period of ageing and there is reduced nourishment of *Rasa Dhatu* and rest of *Dhatu* and ultimately there is hypo functioning of organs and there is ageing or *Jara Abhivyakti*. From above description it is very clear that, *Jara* or Ageing can be prevented with the healthy nourishment and maintenance

of *Rasa Dhatu* without hampering the *Agni* (metabolism) of individual.

Same concept of maintenance of health and state of *Rasa Dhatu* without hampering or vitiating *Agni* is narrated in Ayurveda as *Jara Chikitsa* or *Rasayana*.

### **RASAYANA**<sup>vii</sup>

*Rasayana* focuses on the cyclic Restoration, Repair and Rejuvenation of *Rasa Dhatu*.

**RESTORATION:** As age advances the quality as well as quantity of *Rasa Dhatu* of individual lessens, hence restoration of *Rasa Dhatu* in quantity and quality i.e. its properties is achieved with *Rasayana Chikitsa*.

**REPAIR:** There is lack of the nutrients essential for the growth of body tissues or other *Dhatu*, or if there is vitiation of *Rasa Dhatu* alteration of the nutrition of rest of *Dhatu*. Hence *Rasayana* therapy purifies

and improves the nutrient status of *Rasa Dhatu* so that there is improvement in the status of other body tissue to improve the health and longevity of person.

**REJUVENATION:** As the age advances there is decrement in the properties of *Rasa Dhatu* and hence there is decrement in the functional capacity and life span of individual, hence *Rasayana* therapy strengthens the all properties of *Rasa Dhatu* to rejuvenate the body tissue to reach optimal functional capacity.

Decrement in the state of *Rasa Dhatu* takes place at every stage of human life and the reflection of this decrement of *Rasa Dhatu* is seen in different organs or body parts at different stages. Acharya Sharangadhara has mentioned these changes in body as described in table below.

**TABLE 2: DIFFERENT RASAYANA AS PER DECADE OF LIFE**<sup>viii</sup>

AVASTHA- AGE	SHARIRA KSHAYA	RASAYANA
10 yrs	<i>Balya</i> -childhood	<i>Ghrita kshira</i>
20 yrs	<i>Sharira Vriddhi</i> - Growth	<i>Ghrita, kshira, Chavanprash</i>
30 yrs	<i>Chhavi</i> - Color and complexion	<i>Manjistha, Saariva, chavanprash, Kumari, Chandana, Khadira, Haridra</i>
40 yrs	<i>Medha</i> – Intelligence	<i>Brahmi, Shankhapushpi, Jatamansi, Vacha</i>
50 yrs	<i>Twak</i> - Skin health	<i>Ghrita, Yashtimadhu, Shatavari, Haridra</i>
60 yrs	<i>Drishti</i> – Vision	<i>Amalaki Rasyana, Chyavanprash</i>
70 yrs	<i>Virya</i> – Semen	<i>Ashvagandha, Vidari</i>
80 yrs	<i>Parakrama</i> – Valour	<i>Shilajatu, Vanga Bhasma</i>
90 yrs	<i>Buddhi</i> – Cognition	<i>Brahma Rasayana</i>
100 yrs	<i>Jeevana</i> – Longevity	<i>Chavanprasha</i>
110 yrs	<i>Adhyatma</i> – Spirituality	<i>Pranayama</i>

In all ageing or *Jara* is closely associated with the,

1. Physical derangement - loss of functioning capacity of organs, loss or impairment of the sensory organ, lack of immunity and strength

2. Psychological derangement – Loss of self-confidence, emotional liability, lack of assurance and patience, fearfulness, depression, psychosis, loss of memory

3. Social derangements – Lack of involvement in social activity, loneliness, inferiority, generation gap in thoughts
4. Difficulty in Environmental adjustment – increased percentage of diseases in geriatric population especially due drastic changes in the environment like carcinomas
5. Spiritual quotient and its status in ageing – As age advances the person has increased level of experience and have knowledge and patience to handle different difficult situations without any disturbances in mindset and hence old age person is said to be visionary and spiritually stable one.

Though there is derangement in life in different domains old age should also have good experiences along with emotional as well as spiritual stability in life and should be free from all afflictions of life, and should practice the *Sanyasa* so as to reach salvation without any unfulfilled will at the end stage of life.

In fact ageing is the preparation to move towards salvation with good mental stability, patience, kindness, calmness and wisdom and one has to prepare him or her for the stage of salvation during the old age.

For achievement of salvation with these qualities the individual should practice *Rasayana Chikitsa* or rejuvenation therapy to maintain patience, kindness, stability, and calmness. Old aged people have to share their experiences with that of young generation to guide them and offer the vision and wisdom for future generation. With the practice of *Rasayana Chikitsa* one can maintain intellect, cognition, behavioral and emotional stability along with optimal functioning sensory organs and can guide or show better path to

younger ones for their bright and visionary future. After passing the knowledge and vision to newer generation *Vriddha* person has to achieve their salvation. As it is the moral and social responsibility of geriatric people to pass knowledge and to maintain and improve tradition with bond of love and attachments, at the same time younger generation and society should respect our geriatric population and provide them support to live their lives with ease and joy so that they can reach their last destination of salvation.

The geriatric population is the most responsible personas of the society but at the same time they are more vulnerable to many physical as well as psychological assaults.

It is common scenario in today's Indian society to consider ageing as a social stigma, and many people found it as painful and consider it as a suffering.

**DISCUSSION:** Contrary to common belief, ageing is a blissful stage of life and geriatric population are highly respected, responsible people of society. Ageing can be highly blissful with the help of Ayurveda and *Rasayana Chikitsa* along with other factors play a vital role in treatment and management of geriatric population.

*Rasayana Chikitsa* can be administered as follows -

*Rasayana Dravya Sevana* – As explained earlier regular consumption of *Kshira* (cow's milk) and *Ghrita* (cow's ghee) is very essential for regeneration, repair and restoration of all *Dhatu* or tissues to improve longevity and functional capacity  
*Aachara Rasayana* – following of social etiquettes and traditional as well as ritual practices maintain the respect, emotional bonding, care, love and affection towards the aged people to help them to overcome

geriatric diseases and make their old age more productive, fruitful and blissful.

Use of different Spiritual Practices – Regular practice of *Pranayama*, *Omkara* Chanting, *Trataka Chikitsa*, Chanting of different *Stotra* etc to assure and improving patience

Counseling – as ageing is also associated with feeling of inferiority, loneliness and fearfulness, family members, medical practitioners and society should have talk with geriatric people and should counsel them to reassure and make them aware about their importance and value in the foundation of society and nation

Early diagnosis and treatment of any illness – Considering the chances of increased diseases one has to keep regular health checkup and fitness records to find out any disease and to start any management if required against that disease.

Friendly environment – one has to maintain friendliness in relation as explained in Ayurveda. Maitri is one of the best Rasayana. Hence everyone in family and society has to be behave friendly with old age ones.

Use of different aids – Music, art, literature, discussion on different topics.

The aged have to recognize their prime importance in the family as well as society and should maintain their patience, creativity, kindness and calmness and should pass on their experiences and wisdom to next generation, while on the other hand young ones have to reassure and counsel the old one, should respect them, should maintain the love, care and emotional bonding with them. It is the requirement of time to practice Rasayana therapy in old age along with the use of Spiritual practices like *Pranayama* and

Chanting to improve their confidence, self-esteem, health and longevity.

**CONCLUSION:** To summarize, it is very clear that, ageing is a natural phenomenon and every living being has to pass through the stages of life. Only after crossing these stages can one achieve all *Purushartha* and ultimate of life i.e. salvation and therefore to reach salvation, one has to stay physically fit, psychologically sound, spiritually stable, should be emotionally secured and having good familial binding and social attachment with healthy, productive and active social life. Ultimately ageing can be made productive and blissful with the practice of all above protocols.

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