

**PROBLEMS OF AGING
JARA CIKITSA – THE AYURVEDIC TREATMENT FOR PREVENTING AND
CURING SENILITY**

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ABSTRACT: *JARA VYADHI or senility is caused by onset of the deterioration of cell structure in the body. Though this situation is unavoidable, Ayurveda shows a way for lengthening the onset of senility. This paper gives the precise aspects of the management of this condition according to the texts.*

Old age is generally venerable to all of us. The maturity in thoughts and deeds that gradually develops with the advancement in age and the varied experiences acquired by the aged person, all deserve respect and consideration. But, old age has more than its due share of undesirable aspects. It is also considered to be a stage of mental and physical degeneration. The furtive glance of death becomes perceptible at this stage characterized by wrinkling, greying, frequent shadows of amnesia, lethargy aversion to enchanting worldly pleasures etc. which are perhaps, the characteristic wounds inflicted by the long struggle in the battle of life. But for these undesirable aspects old age which is the most matured phase of life, would have been celebrated universally on a much larger scale.

Not infrequently, persons who are not that advanced Chronologically also fall victims of the above unpleasant disabilities of senility. It is there that the pangs of degeneration, JARA, become all the more unbearable. Hence it would be a great boon to humanity at large, if there was a device for the prevention of degeneration, and

rejuvenation of those who are already afflicted.

In ancient India much thought and research had gone into the founding the effective practice of methods for preventing and curing the dreaded symptoms of senility. Legend has it that Maharsi Cyavana was rejuvenated into a study youth putting the clock back, by a course of Rasayana Treatment which is also called KAYA KALPACIKITSA, performed by the well known ASWINIDEVAS. Though this could well be a pigment of imagination or exaggeration, it atleast proves that the rehabilitation and rejuvenation of the human body was within the sphere of specialisation and experimentation of scholars even in the Vedic Period.

The knowledge of measures for the conquest of degeneration gradually developed into one of the eight branches of the Science of life (Ayurveda) bearing the name, JARA CIKITSA or 'RASAYANA CIKITSA'. Kaya Cikitsa (General medicine), Bala Chikilsa (Paediatrics), Graha Cikitsa (a kind of mental therapy), Urdhwanga Cikitsa (treatment of the limbs above the neck like

eye, ear, nose and throat mouth etc.), Salya Chikitsa (Surgery), Visha Cikitsa or Agada Tantra (Toxicology) and Vrsa Cikitsa (treatment for sexual and reproductive debility) – these are the other seven branches.

What is the literal meaning of “Rasayana Cikitsa”? ‘LABHOPAYO HI SASTIANAM Resadham Rasayanam” – Rasa yana is the method of treatment which purifies, prunes and strengthens all the dhatus (tissues) of the body such as Rasa (Chyle), Raktha (blood) Mamsa (Muscular Tissue), Medas (fat), Asthi (Bone), Majja (Bone, Marrow) and Sukla (Semen – the vital fluid) – Astangahrdaya Uttara 39 – 2). Charaka also renders the same definition. Susruta defines Rasayana as a method of treatment which not only prolongs the span of human life but also refreshes and invigorates the vital organs of man. Rasayana cikitsa deals with the measures and recipes which enable the individual to retain his manhood and youthful vigour and generally serve to make the human system invulnerable to disease and decay (SUSRUTA SUTRA 1- 8 (7)). It is also named as JARA CIKITSA (JARA means senility manifested by the above mentioned symptoms of ageing. The tone and elasticity of the skin and blood vessels become less at this stage). Yogis those who concentrate on Yogasastra, generally call this KAYAKALPACIKITSA.

The body traverses the four stages namely BALYA (Childhood), KAUMARA (Adolescence), YAUVANA (youth and VARDHAKYA (Senility) and ends in MRTYU (death). The body is composed of various types of cells. Each of the above seven tissues (DHATUS) is composed of a specific type of cells. The processes of the birth of the new cells and the death of the old ones are going on continuously in our body. These two processes are respectively

considered as the constructive and the destructive metabolism (SANGHATAKA – VIGHATAKATMAKA JIVYANUPAKA). In the stages of BALYA, KAUMARA and Yauvana (Childhood, adolescence and youth respectively) the constructive metabolism will be more active. Then the degenerative process causes Jara (senility). Death is considered to be the absolute final phase of this stage.

One of the Sanskrit synonyms of the human body is “Sarira”. This word is derived from “SEERYATE ITI SAREERAM” means that it degenerates and decays from the birth itself. Charaka also explains that the degeneration and decay are the natural characteristics of the human body (Charaka Sutra 16 – 27). The Rasayana method of treatment is considered to be a measure to check and prevent this process of natural degeneration and decay and by maintaining the strength of the Dhatus.

Modern views

The modern scientists also are proving in one way or other that it is possible to check the process of degeneration to some extent. The efforts in this direction come within the purview of geriatrics – a branch of the modern medical science which deals exclusively with the problem of the natural degeneration in the old age. In 1930, the Soviet Scientist Dr. Alexander Bogomolets found out a Serum known as ‘A. C. S. Serum’. According to him the crux of the problem of senility is the growing sluggishness and failure in the functioning of the connective tissues which have a major role to play as a medium in helping the process of supplying sufficient nutritive principles from the tiny blood vessels to the tissues and taking in return the exudates from the tissues to the blood vessels (thereby nourishing the tissues and purifying

them). Thus, in 1958, Dr. CORROL WILLIAM, a biologist of Harvard University, discovered and isolated an active juvenile Hormone from the human body – An endocrinal secretion – that can be administered, after some careful processing by certain specific methods, into the human body. But all these are still in the experimental stage. The ancient Indian saints had declared the feasibility of this type of rejuvenation and developed certain specific elaborate methods which had proved successful. So the tap – roots of the modern counter – part of this branch of treatment, Gerontology or geriatrics, can be traced to the JARA or (Rasayana) CIKITSA propounded and practised by our ancient Indian medical system.

The faculties of the mind and physique may be adversely influenced by some specific type of chronic diseases and also by the process of degeneration which is, as mentioned above, a natural affliction. It is, therefore, undoubtedly better to undergo the treatment for rejuvenation and maintenance of the healthy metabolism of the cells of the various tissues of the body in advance i.e before the on-set of senility. The ancient Acharyas have laid much emphasis on this point. “PURVE VAYAS MADHYE VA TAT PRAYOGYAM” meaning it will be in the fitness of things if it is performed early or atleast in the middle age of a person.

Effects of rasayana chikitsa*

A person subjected to this treatment begets longevity, good memory, intelligence, perfect health, youthfulness, lustrous healthy complexion, good voice, generosity, strength to the body and sense organs, power

of expression, increased sexual potency and charm (Astanga Hridaya – Utara – 39 – 1, 2). So to overcome Jara means to achieve all these benefits and to maintain them as long as possible. These benefits have a comprehensive nature embracing all the faculties of the mind and physique simultaneously.

The Two Main Divisions

The Rasayana Cikitsa or treatment of rehabilitation may be generally divided into two main divisions according to the methods adopted : 1) KUTI PRAVESIKA and 2) VATATAPIKA.

In ‘Kutipravesika’ the person enters into a specially constructed KUTI or house for the treatment and stay there till the treatment is completed. This method is the best in view of the totality of the effect. But, it is suitable only to the persons who observe all the meticulous details of the elaborate treatment in respect of diet, routine etc. One should have absolute freedom to devote sufficient time to complete the full course of the treatment depending upon the nature of the individual case.

‘Vatatapika’ method does not impose so much of restrictions as in the case of ‘Kuti Pravesika’. The patient can undergo the treatment with moderate exposure to the normal climatic conditions. Literally it (VATATAPIKA) means “one that allows the patient exposure to win and sun”. This method is suitable to those who cannot afford to spare a long period and who do not possess the capacity to gather all the facilities essential for the KUTI PRAVESIKA method.

* “Dirghamayur Smrtirmedhamarogyam Tarunam Vayah Prabha Varna Swaraudaryam Dehendriya Balodayam Vak – siddhim Vrishatam Kanthi – Mavapnothi Rasayanat”.

Acara Rasayana

There is also another method of Rasayana Cikitsa described by Caraka : It is called 'Acara Rasayana' which is based on good and flawless behaviour pattern combined with purity of mind and thoughts.

The Description of the 'Kuti'

The KUTI has to be located on the North – Eastern side of the city. Kind Physicians and good natured humble persons only can reside in it. It should not have access to wild poisonous creatures wicked person and erotic elements.

The Kuti should contain a main room situated in the innermost place with specified dimension where the patient has to remain during the whole course of the treatment. It should be enclosed by two adjacent outer apartments having good and concealed ventilation and impenetrable to smoke, direct sunlight, dust, etc. which will disturb the tranquility and purity of the atmosphere. The innermost room allotted to the patient should be very comfortable with all the amenities and equipments giving protection to the patient from the prevalent seasonal and climatic conditions. All kind of medicines, accessories and attendants necessary for the treatment should have accommodation provided in the 'Kuti' so that the patient need not leave the place till

the end of the treatment. The furnishings should also be pleasant to the patient¹.

VAGBHATA insists that the patient, before entering the KUTI for the Rasayana Cikitsa, should have performed the SNEHANA (Lubrication – A course of administrations of fatty substances like ghee, oil, etc. both internally and externally) and SWEDANA (A process for producing free DIAPHORESIS or profuse perspiration all over the body) and then SAMSODHANA KRIYAS like measure of VAMANA (EMESIS = the act of vomiting) VIRECANA (PURGATION – induction to free vacuation of faeces), VASTI (Enema), Nasya – A process of application of certain medicines through the nostrils for extirpating the vitiated factors from the organs above the neck, RAKTAMOKSA (Letting off blood from the veins by employing certain prescribed techniques) etc. These are certain renowned methods of extirpation and detoxication according to Ayurveda. After this one should have regained his strength with SAMSARJANA KRIYA which comprises of dietetics which gradually kindle the dull KAYAGNA (Power of digestion and tissue metabolism). All these are called PURVAKARMAS (The measures to be fulfilled before taking to the treatment proper) during which period also, the patient is advised not to have free exposure to the external climatic variations.

1. "Nivatae Nirbhaye Harmye Prapyopakarane Pure Disyudicyam Subhe Dese Trigarbham Suksmalocanam Dhumatapa Rajo Vyala Stri Muorkhadyavilanghitam Sagga Vaidyo Pakaranam Sumrstam Karayate Kutim".

So it is always preferable that these treatments are also accomplished in the 'Kuti' only, as advised by CARAKA. It is very important that after obtaining the proper KOSTHA SUDDHI (internal Purification) by these processes only one should take to the Rasayana Chikitsa proper. "The Rasayana treatment given to a patient without all these cleansing or detoxicating processes would be futile just like a "painting performed on an unclean shabby canvas^{*2}.

Drugs used

A large number of chosen drugs have been recommended for 'Rasayana Cikitsa'. Charaka has prescribed a 'VAYASTHAPANA VARGA' meaning drugs that are capable of maintaining the youthful vigour consisting of ten items namely : 1) AMRITA (COCCULUS CORDIFOLIUS, Micrs), 2) ABHAYA (TEEMINALIS CHEBULA, Retz. Reticulate, 3) *AMALAKI – (EMBLICA OFFIOINALIS, 4) RASNA – (VANDA ROXBURGHII, Br.) , 5) APARAJITA (CLITORIA TERNATEA, Linn.) , 6) JIVANTI – (DENDROBIUM MACRAEL, SW.), 7) SATAVARI (ASPARAGUS RACEMOSUS, WILLD.), 8) MANDUKAPARNI – (HYDROCOTYLE ASTATICA, Linn.), 9) STHIRA – (PSEUDARTHRIA VISCIDA W & A.), 10) PUNARNAVA – (BOER HAVIA DIFFUSA Linn.) and AMALAKI has been declared to be the best among them. SOMA (is said to be more potent and radical in respect of its comprehensive effect on the physique and mind. AMALAKI is remarkable for its abundance. It has all

along been within the reach of a common man. The famous herb namely PIPPALI (PIPER LONGUM LINN.) and VACA – (ACORUS CALAMUS LINN.) are also not less in importance. Among the nor medicinal group or things that can be included in diet as well like pure cow's ghee and milk, have an important place.

BRAHMACARYA (Celibecy) is also indicated for its specific role in increasing the mental facultieis and the longevity of life. It has its own characteristic influences favourable to proper metabolism and enrichment of the most essential vital force (OJAS) which is adored as the essential end product of all the other seven 'Dhatus' (tissues).

RASAYANA CHIKILSA has got two main divisions : 1) The treatment intended only for rejuvenation and maintenance of health to those who are not having any specific Chronic disease excepting some natural ones like senility and allied complaints. 2) The treatment mainly intended for curative purposes especially in certain Chronic diseases. BRAHMA RASAYANA, AMALAKA RASAYANA, CYAVANAPRASA, TRIPHALA RASAYANA, PANCARAVINDA GHRITHAM as examples for certain preparations HARITAKI, VIBHITAKI (TERMINALIA BELLERICA, Roxb) are some of the common ingredients of these preparations that are widely recommended for rejuvenation. AGASTYARASAYANA, KUSMANDA RASAYANA, VASISTHA RASAYANA, BHALLATAKA RASAYANA,

2. "Avisuddhe Sarie HI Yukto Rasayano Vidhth Vajikaro va Maline Vaste Raga Ivaphalah".

BRAHMI GRTA, PIPPLI RASAYANA (VARDHAMANA PIPPLI KALPA), LASUNA (GARLIC) RASAYANA etc. are only some of the items that can be considered as examples for the Rasayanas having curative properties also in certain specific diseases. It is the duty of the physician to choose them according to the nature of the case.

Vardhaman pippli kalpa

The required quantity of PIPPALI of best variety is collected and treated well by a process of keeping it immersed in the water containing the ashes of KIMSUKA (BUTEA FRONDOSA, Roxb & Ko-en: N. O. PAPILIONACEAE) for a specified length of time. After this process it is fried in cow's ghee and taken by the patient with honey or milk or both.

Ten Pipalis on the first day, 20 on the 2nd day and 30 on the third day has to be taken and then the number of the Pippli is increased by 10 each day till the 10th day after which the number of reduced by 10 on each day in the same way so that by the 19th day the patient would have totally consumed, 1,000 numbers of Pippali. During these days, after digesting the medicine and milk properly, the patient can take only the cooked SASTHIKA (Navara) rice mixed with milk and ghee only. Nothing else can be taken over and above this. But, according to the number of the Pippali variations can be made in the quantities of milk etc. consumed by the patient. There is a special instruction to administer up to 2,000 Pippalies in the same method using goat's milk. This kind of Pippali Kalpa has got also some specific positive effects in chronic cough, dyspnola consumption, diabetes etc. There are several

other methods to use Pippali for rejuvenative and curative purposes.

In certain cases AMALAKI alone is used. The Amalaky is well processed in certain prescribed methods and given daily to the patient in large quantities mixed with honey and milk and nothing will be taken by the patient other than this during the whole course of the treatment, say for one month.

BHALLATAKA, TRIKANTAKA and SANKHAPUSPI etc. are also used in the similar way as prescribed according to the nature of the case.

Rasayana for improving mental faculties.

The following are particularly indicated for improvement or rejuvenation of sharpness of the memory, intelligence and the acuity of the sensory organs. They are known as MEDHYA RASAYANAS (Medha – intellect. Anything that enriches it is MEDHYA).

- (1) VACA (ACORUS CALAMUS Linn.)
- (2). MADUKA PARNI (AYDROCOTYLE ASIATICA Linn.
- (3) SANKHA PUSPI (CEITORIA TERNATEA, Linn.), (4) SATAVARI (ASPARAGUS RACE MOSUS, Willd.). (5) AMALAKI (EMBLICA OFFICINALIS, Retz. Reticulate), (6) HARITAKI (MYROBALAN TERMINALI CHEMBULA, Retz., reticulate), (7). BRAHMI (HERPESTIS MONNIERA H. B. & K.), (8). ASWAGANDHA – (WITHANIA SOMNIFERA Den.), (9) PIPPALI (PIPER LONGUM Linn.), (10) BHRNGARJA (eclipta alba, Hassk.), etc are some of the important items belonging to this group. The minerals like Mercury, Gold, Mica (Abhra),

Ayaskanta (magnetic Iron) and diamonds like MANIKYA, NILAM, GOMEDAKAM, VAIDURYAM etc are also belonging to this group, Elephant tusk, Cow's milk, butter, ghee, musk, Pearls, Pravala – these items that belong to the animal kingdom are also considered to be MEDHYA RASAYANAS (Rasayanas that improve the mental faculties).

Conclusion

The Ayurvedic treatment for old age is one of the eight important branches of the Ayurvedic system of medicine. There is evidence that it was in vogue in ancient India even as early as the 2nd century B. C. and it gradually expanded into a fulfilled specific line of treatment capable of remarking useful life with youthful vigour enjoyable till the last moment when natural or accidental death casts its shadow all on a sudden. Any way, it will be a peaceful end free from all the usual agonies of the great liberation of the soul. But, alas, this glorious branch of the science of life is now remaining in obscurity keeping away from the practical field barring some occasional incidents of its performance in any remotest corner of this vast country. Strictly speaking this is the most suitable era for its revival. The radiation menace caused by various

hazardous types of nuclear experiments reportedly being conducted in some known and unknown places, itself is considered to be one of the major factors for all sorts of degenerative conditions in all living beings including plants. The stresses and strains of the modern industrialized world would shatter the nerves of persons in all walks of life. Various diseases like anxiety neurosis and other emotional disturbances besides various kinds of nervous and cardio – vascular insufficiencies. A line of treatment comprising complete relaxation of both mind and physique with strict regimen in daily diet and routine etc. like that of the Rasayana treatment is the only answer to the problem. It will at least go a long way in checking this state of affairs. It will rejuvenate the person afflicted by senility. But, now the practical method of the treatment itself requires reorientations to suit the modern trends of living before we take to it boldly. It is high time that our sweet dreams revolving round the installation of some well – equipped KUTIS (buildings for rehabilitation) exclusively for Rasayana treatment at appropriate centers blessed with picturesque scenery and salubrious climate free from the humdrum multicoloured bewildering stream of life in various parts of the country, take a definite shape and get concretely materialized.

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