

GERIATRIC CARE THROUGH AYURVEDA

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(Rajasthan).**ABSTRACT**

Geriatrics has become the new emerging science in the field of medicine. It includes all the necessary care of elderly people to meet their physical & mental needs which can improve their quality of life & maintain their independence of life as long as possible. As old age is the crucial stage of life in which all the debilitating physical conditions demand more attention & care. A long back ago our *Aacharya* stated rejuvenating therapy which resembles the geriatrics but it is more precise than modern concept. *Rasayana* & *Vajeekaran*, these are the two magic therapies contributed by *Ayurveda* in the field of medicine. *Ayurveda* has the potential to grow as the best substitution for modern geriatrics. By adopting the basic principles of *Ayurveda* along with

dietetics, *Panchakarma*, *Ayurvedic* medicines, *Yoga* it can serve the purpose of longevity. *Ayurveda* believes that *Vata Dosha* becomes more prominent & active in later stages of life which produces diseases like dementia, Parkinsonism, paralysis, osteoarthritis, deafness, cataract etc. This *Prakupit Vata Dosha* produces imbalance between anabolism & catabolism leading to wasting of body in this group of people. The Indian government has also started certain welfare programs for elderly people. It is the responsibility of every society to add certain healthy years to this population. The present article will give the special emphasis on longevity of life in elderly people through *Ayurveda*.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Geriatrics, *Rasayana*, *Vata Dosha*, Longevity.**INTRODUCTION**

According to *Ayurveda* the lifespan of an individual is divided into three parts known as *Vaya*.^[1]

Every person passes through a period when various decaying changes take place, and this time period is known as *Vridhnavastha*. *Vridhnavastha* is the last part of the lifespan and is mainly characterized by degenerative changes. This stage is characterized by decay in the body, *Dhatu* (various anatomical tissues), perception power of the *Indriya* (Sensory and motor organs), potency, strength, speech, various mental and cognitive functions (e.g., memory, intellect, reception, retention, analytic ability, etc.). During this phase there is predominance of *Vaayu Dosha*. The major physical changes seen at this time are wrinkling of skin, greying of hair, baldness and a diminishing ability to do physical work. Diseases that complicate this stage are *Kasa* (cough), *Shwas* (asthma), *Daurbalya* (weakness) and so on.

Geriatrics is sometimes called as medical gerontology. Old age is a sensitive phase as elderly people need care and comfort to lead a healthy life without worries and anxiety. Geriatric syndromes include a number of conditions such as dementia, depression, delirium, incontinence, vertigo, falls, spontaneous bone fractures, failure to thrive, neglect and abuse. Geriatric syndromes are associated with reduced life expectancy.

In 1965, Bernard Isaacs coined the term “geriatric giants.” Professor Isaacs named these 'giants' as immobility, instability, incontinence, and impaired intellect/memory.^[2]

Prevention of aging in youngsters

The process of aging is totally dependent on diet and lifestyle. Now-a-days young generation is also going through signs of aging at very early age. In this category aging can be prevented by:

- ❖ Including some important principles of *Dincharya* (daily regimen) in the daily routine, for example, *Anjana*, *Abhyanga*, especially *Shiro-Abhyanga* (Head massage), *nasya*, *Sneha-Gandusha*, cleansing of feet and external orifices, exercise and so on.
- ❖ By following the other principles of *Swasthavritta* such as utilization of *Trayopastambha* according to the rules; to bear suppressible urges (i.e. mental fluctuations) and to expel unsuppressible urges (i.e., natural urges); regular removal of aggravated *Dosha* according to *Ritu* (season) by *Panchakarma*; regular utilization of *Rasayana* (rejuvenating treatment) and *Vaajikarana* (aphrodisiacs) following the principles of *Sadvritta* (social and personal ethics) and *Achara Rasayana* (ethics having effects of *Rasayana*) and so on.^[3]
- ❖ Taking a diet strictly in accordance with the prescribed rules.

Management of aging in oldage

It is a natural and *Yapya* (palliative) process. It occupies the prime place among the *Yapya* diseases in the context of *Agrya Dravya* (foremost) described in *Charak Sutrasthana* chapter 25⁴. It is essential to manage this period of aging properly, as it is a time of increased susceptibility to various chronic and degenerative diseases. The following principles can be considered in this context:

- ❖ Keep the lifestyle as close as possible to the ideal prescribed by *Ayurveda*.
- ❖ Avoid the provocative causes of *Kshaya* (degeneration) and *Vata*, for example, excessive physical and mental work, vigorous exercise.
- ❖ Follow, as far as possible, all the rules regarding diet.
- ❖ Take *Laghu* (light) and *Santarpaka* (nutritive) diet.
- ❖ Utilization of *Rasayana*, *Vajeekarana*, and *Yapana Basti*.
- ❖ Follow the principles of *Sadvritta* and *Achara Rasayana*
- ❖ If any disease persists or manifests, take treatment promptly.

Treatment of aging

Aging is considered as a kind of disease (*Swabhavavyadhi*) and its treatment has been clearly described in various Ayurvedic texts. Even in *Sushruta Samhita*, there is a chapter titled *Swabhavavyadhipratishedhiya*, in which *Rasayana Chikitsa* (rejuvenating treatment) is described.^[5] In this chapter, various treatment principles for natural diseases have been mentioned. Treatment principles related to aging are completely dependent on *Rasayana* as exemplified in the famous story of *Maharshi Chyawana*^[6] mentioned by Acharya Charak in *Rasayanadhyay*. However, some *Vajeekarana* formulations are also useful.

If *Rasayana* therapy is used according to the classical methods, and if the correct drugs are available, it will be quite possible to treat aging successfully. However, the methods described are impractical and cannot be followed in this era, due to various reasons. For example, drugs are either unavailable or are less effective, the lifestyle of the people is fast and busy, there is a low level of *Satva* or defective mental constitution, and so on.

Ayurveda comprises of a specialized branch that deals with ageing and has a rich source of drugs, formulations and various principles for anti-ageing. *Rasayana Tantra* literally means the science that deals with anti-ageing, longevity of life span, improving physical strength, cognition and memory i.e. improving the functions of brain and body as well as treating various diseases in old age.^[7]

दीर्घमायुः स्मृतिं मेधामारोग्यं तरुणं वयः । प्रभावर्णस्वरौदार्यदेहेन्द्रियबलं परम् ।।

वाक्सिद्धिं प्रणतिं कान्तिं लभते ना रसायनात् । लाभोपायो हि शस्तानां रसादिनां रसायनम् ।।

Besides *Rasayana*, *Ayurveda* can also play a major role in managing the long term debilitating disorders. More the elderly are independent; more improvement in their quality of life is seen. So, to improve the quality of life of the elderly, holistic approach in making them active and healthy is necessary. For this *Ayurveda* with all its medicines and principles related to lifestyle, food and psychological well-being can be applied to benefit the senior citizens in Indian society.

Indian government also finds its duty towards elderly people as in past it was not a major problem. But due to concise families & ignorance it has become a considerable issue. The number of this people is increasing in the population. So for the same Indian government has launched certain schemes which are enlisted below^[8]

- Senior Citizens Saving Scheme (SCSS) ...
- Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY) ...
- Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana. ...
- Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY) ...
- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme.

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