

GERIATRIC CARE: AYURVEDA PERSPECTIVE**Seema Parshuram Daf***

MD (Rachana Sharir)

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***Corresponding Author****Dr. Seema Parshuram Daf**

MD (Rachana Sharir)

ABSTRACT

Ageing is a process of physical, psychological and social change in multi-dimensional aspects. The world's elderly population is increasing. By 2050, one-fifth of the world will be older than 65 years. In India, there are about 113 million elderly. The prevalence of illness increases as we age, at the same time, life expectancy decreases. Ayurveda, has got the potential for prevention of diseases by health promotion and management of diseases occurring in old age. Future aging can be reduced before the occurrence of old age. In fact the ideal time for treating the geriatric problems is youth. Adherence to discipline in youth keeps the geriatric problems away. By adopting a healthier lifestyle, the risk of non-communicable chronic disease can

be reduced. The focused branch Rasayana (rejuvenation) or Jarachikitsa promote healthy longevity.

KEYWORDS:– Jaraawastha, Vruddhavastha, Rasayana, Ageing, Geriatric.

INTRODUCTION

Vriddhavastha is the last part of the lifespan and is mainly characterized by degenerative changes. Aging refers to a multidimensional process of physical, psychological, and social change. The changes are always degenerative in nature. Ayurveda was introduced to the earth so that man could enjoy a long and healthy lifespan. Several types of principles have been described in Ayurveda. It is known that at the base of all creation, there are nine *Dravya*, (causative factors) that is, *Panchamahabhuta* (space, air, fire, water and earth); *Mana* (Mind), *Atma* (soul), *Kala* (time) and *disha* (directions). *Panchmahabhuta*. *Panchamahabhuta* provide the basic structure for all the manifestations and this manifested creation, is known as the universe. The universe resides within the limitations of *Kala* and *Disha* in a clockwise manner. Among all the *Dravya*, *Kala* is the most important and potent, as it includes all

creation in itself as well as it affects all creation in a clockwise manner, and human beings are no exception. *Kala* interacts with a human from conception till death and this time period is called *Ayu* (lifespan).

The lifespan has been divided into three parts, also known as *Vaya* (various stages of life); these are *Bala* (early stage of life), *Madhya* (middle stage of life), and *Jirna* or *Vriddhavastha* (later stage of life). The major changes carried out in the body during these stages are, growth, achievement, maintenance and decay. Thus, aging is the process of decaying and this manifests in the form of various degenerative changes.

Concept of vriddhavastha (Later stage of life)^[1]

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Vriddhavastha or Jirnavastha (old age), refers to the period after 60 or 70 years. Every person will pass through a period where various decaying changes take place, and this time period is known as Vriddhavastha.

Pathophysiology^[2]

Growth, development, and maintenance of the anatomy and physiology of the body is completely dependent on four factors:

1. *Kala* (Time)
2. *Swabhava* (Nature)
3. Diet (Which should be excellent in the terms of nutrients) and
4. Absence of obstructive factors

Among these, diet is very important as it nourishes *dhatu* and is responsible for the maintenance of compactness, strength, and formation of an excellent form of *dhatu*. This excellent form of *dhatu* reflects in the terms of *Sara* (absoluteness of body tissues), which makes a person look young and beautiful.

When the diet is defective in the terms of *Gramya-Ahara* (a deficient and unplanned diet) and when the rules are not followed regarding diet as well as lifestyle like –

1. Indulgence in day sleep
2. Daily coitus without *Vaajikarana* (Aphrodisiacs)

3. Daily alcohol drinking
4. Excessive physical work
5. Lack of exercise
6. Mental and emotional fluctuations etc.

Then as indicated by Acharya Charak in the second *Pada* (sub-chapter) of *Rasayan* (rejuvenation) there is vitiation of *Tridosha* which leads to various progressive pathological changes due to improper utilization of the diet. These pathological changes include –

1. Loss of compactness of the muscles
2. Looseness of joints
3. Vitiation of *Rakta* (Blood)
4. Excessive production of *Meda* (Fatty tissue)
5. Failure of *Majja* (Marrow) accumulation in bones
6. Failure of production of *Shukra* (Semen), and
7. Loss of *Oja* (Vital factor).

This pathology leads to various symptoms for example-

1. No enthusiasm due to increase in sleep
2. Drowsiness and lethargy;

The respiratory rate is increased, the person is unable to initiate and perform physical and mental work, the memory, intellect and complexion deteriorate and the person become susceptible to various types of diseases and fails to live out his complete lifespan.

When all these changes are produced according to *Kala* (time) and *Swabhava* (nature), it is known as *Kalaja Vriddhavastha* (natural aging). When these changes are produced due to defective diet and lifestyle, *Vriddhavastha* begins earlier and it is then known as *Akalaja Vriddhavastha* (Untimely aging).

Aging can be prevented by^[3]

Including some important principles of *Dincharya* (daily regimen) in the daily routine, for example –

1. *Anjana* (A type of eye treatment)
2. *Abhayanga* (Body massage), especially *Shiro-Abhayanga* (Head massage)
3. *Nasya* (Oily nasal drops)

4. *Sneha-Gandusha* (Retaining of oil in the mouth)
5. Cleansing of Feet and External orifices
6. Exercise and so on.

By following the other principles of *Swasthavritta* such as utilization of –

1. *Tryopastambha* (Diet, sleep and coitus) according to the rules
2. 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*
3. Regular utilization of *Rasayana* (Rejuvenating treatment) and *Vaajikarana* (aphrodisiacs)
4. Following the principles of *Sadvritta* (Social and Personal ethics) and
5. *Achara Rasayana* (Ethics having effects of *Rasayana*) and so on.

Taking a diet strictly in accordance with the prescribed rules.

Management of aging^[4]

It is a natural and *Yapya* (palliative) disease, it occupies the prime place among the *Yapya* diseases in the context of *Agrya dravya* (foremost) described in *charak sutrasthana* chapter 25. 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-

1. Keep the lifestyle as close as possible to the ideal prescribed by Ayurveda.
2. Avoid the provocative causes of *Kshaya* (Degeneration) and *Vata*, for example, excessive physical and mental work, vigorous exercise, tolerance of unsuppressible urges, intolerance of suppressible urges, and so on.
3. Follow, as far as possible, all the rules regarding diet; take a *Laghu* (light) and *Santarpaka* (Nutritive) diet.
4. Utilization of *Rasayana*, *Vaajikarana* and *Yapana Vasti* (A type of enema having palliative property) regularly.
5. Follow the principles of *Sadvritta* and *Achara Rasayana*. Involve oneself in the Supreme Power (God) or the eternal truth by any means as it increases the level of *satva* in mind. Thus all these things improve mental immunity.
6. If any disease persists or manifests, take treatment promptly.

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