

A review - role of *Vayahsthapan Gana Mahakashaya* in aging / geriatrics

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Abstract

Geriatrics is emerging as a main challenging specialty. Old age is an undesirable and inevitable phase of human life. *Acharya Sushrut* considered *Jara* (Aging) as natural phenomena while describing the *Swabhavabalapravritta Vyadhi* (naturally occurring diseases). The combination of dominant state of *vata dosha* and deterioration of *Rasadidhatu*, *strotas* and *agni* are responsible for the various degenerative changes and the process of decay in the body. In *Ayurveda* the concept of anti-ageing is embodied in *Rasayana*. *Rasayana* therapy helps to prevent ageing and its ill effects. It provides longevity, immunity against diseases and improves mental and intellectual competence. Various single and combination of drugs like *Vayasthapan mahakashaya* having *Rasayana* properties have been mentioned in ancient treaties which helps in overall nourishment of different *dhatu*. *Rasayana* drugs possess strong anti-oxidant activities. This activity is responsible for combating the effect of ageing, stress, diabetes and autoimmune diseases. *Acharya Charaka* has given unique importance to *Vayasthapan Mahakashaya* for maintaining vitality and managing ageing and its allied ill effects.

The purpose of this paper is to put forward and reestablish the role of *Vayasthapan gana Mahakashaya* drug's in

alleviating age related disorders and its uses in Geriatric health and care potential.

Keywords – *Ayurveda*, Ageing, Geriatrics, *Rasayana*, *Vayasthapan gana Mahakashaya*.

Introduction

Ayurveda is a science of life and longevity, and *Jara-chikitsa* being an integral part of *Ashtanga-Ayurveda* is *Anadi* in nature. On historical point of view it has been considered that old age and diseases related to it seems to be as old as recorded *Ayurveda* itself. Aging is defined as a progressive breakdown of homeostatic adaptive responses of the body.

In old age *vata dosha* is physiologically in a dominant state and *Rasadi dhatus* (bodily tissues) are in a deficient state^[1]. This is responsible for the various degenerative changes and the process of decay in the body. In present scenario due to changing and faulty dietary habits, defective lifestyle, excessive stress and lack of exercise, the process of Aging starts at early age. These factors cause various degenerative changes in the body.

The consequences of Aging appear after reproductive age. With age various structural and functional changes occur in different organs and systems of the human body. Modern science deals exclusively with the problems of Aging and the diseases of the elderly.

The main purpose of *Ayurveda* is *Swasthasya swastha rakshanam* hence it incorporates various techniques for the promotion of the health and prevention of diseases in old age. It presents a good concept of Aging, process of delaying it and its management.

Geriatrics is emerging as a main challenging specialty, because of the ever growing population of old people all over the world including India. Population Aging is transforming the world in dramatic and fundamental ways [2]. Life expectancy is increased, resulting from a series of social, economic, public health and medical victories over disease.

Modern system of medicine has nothing much to recommend in geriatric care except the medical management of some diseases of the old age with limited success. So there is a need to generate awareness among the mass about the end result of population ageing (the increase in the number and proportion of older people in society) and about the potentials of *Ayurveda* in geriatric health care.

Concept of Aging

Aging is the multidimensional process of physical, psychological, and social changes. There are many degenerative changes takes place in *Vridhdhavastha*.

Person is referred as old after the age of sixty years. There is progressive diminution of *dhatu* (body tissues), strength of sense organs, vigor, masculinity and bravery, understanding power, memory, speech and analyzing facts in old age [3].

According to *Acharya Charaka*, age has been divided in three parts, i.e. *balyavastha* (young age), *madhyamavastha* (middle age) and *jirnavastha* (old age). According to *Acharya Sushruta* after seventy years of age one is called as old in whom the *dhatu*s (body tissues), sensory and motor organs, strength, vigor and enthusiasm decline gradually. In old age, a person develops

wrinkles on the skin, graying of hair, baldness with other complaints and decrease in working capacity [4].

According to *Acharya Vagbhata* again mentioned the description of additional features such as aged persons suffers from *kasa* (cough), *shvasa* (dyspnea), *valita* (wrinkle), *khalitya* (alopecia), *agnisada*, *slathasara mansa sandhyasthita* (looseness of muscles, joints and bone), *twakapaurushya* (skin becomes rough), *avanama* (body bends forward), *vepathu* (tremors), etc. [5] The *Sharangadhara Samhita* [6] and *Ashtanga Sangraha* [7] describe the sequential bio-loss occurring during different decades of life due to process of Aging. According to *Ayurveda*, “*Swabhava*” [8] and “*Parinama*” “*Kalasyaparinamena Jaramrityunimittajaha*” [9] are considered as the responsible factors in the causation of *Jara* (Aging).

Modern Gerontologists usually define Aging in terms of the gradual, insidious and progressive decline in the structure and function (involving molecules, cells, tissues, organs and organisms) that begin to unfold after the achievement of sexual maturity. Biological Aging is a major risk factor for essentially all of the major Geriatric disorders, including dementias of the Alzheimer type, Parkinson’s disease, age related Macular degeneration, Ocular cataracts, all forms of Atherosclerosis, type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, Congestive heart failure, Sarcopenia, Osteoporosis, Degenerative inter Vertebral disc disease, Immune-senescence, Benign prostatic hyperplasia and most forms of cancer. The biochemical composition of tissue changes with age, physiologic capacity decreases, the ability to maintain homeostasis in adapting to stress declines and vulnerability to various diseases increases with age.

Aging is known as “*Jara*” which is defined as to become old by the act of wearing out “*juryati iti jara*”. It is also called as “*Vardhakya*” meaning increasing

age ^[10]. According to *Chakrapani* onset of natural Aging process differs from person to person ^[11]. The onset and progress of Aging depends on factors like *Prakriti* (individual's constitution) and *Sarva dhatusarata* (compactness of body tissue) which are genetically predetermined according to *Ayurveda*.

In *Ayurveda*, the phenomenon of ageing is also related to principle of *Tridosha*. The *tridosha* (*vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*) is the most important factor in maintenance of good health and production of disease. During childhood *kapha dosha* predominates, in the middle age *pitta dosha* and in the older age *vata dosha* is said to be dominant. The properties of *vata dosha* are described as *ruksha*, *laghu*, *sheeta*, *khara* and *vishada*. So *Vata dosha* by nature, decreases luster of skin, lessens body strength, dries and decays the body and hastens ageing process. Thus the process of ageing can be evaluated in terms of the *tridoshika* physiology. Apart from *doshas*, *Agni* also plays an important part in ageing process. Body tissues are regularly nourished by dietary substances and *agni* is said to be responsible for the conversion of dietary substances into tissue elements. In old age, more vitiation of *vata dosha* occurs which is responsible for *vishamagni* which affects the digestion and creating under nourishment of the tissues. This under nourishment of the tissues may have an impact on low status of *dhatwagni* which creates diseases in elder people.

Due to *dhatwagnimandya* *poshak dhatu* formation gets affected and causes a diminution of *dhatu* in old age. As a result of which, the essence of all *dhatus*, *Oja* is decreased, which is responsible for *Sharira Sthairya* i.e. compactness of body elements. *Oja kshaya* leads to the molecular & cellular injury which exceeds their repair capacity and further accelerating the Aging process ultimately ending in death ^[12].

Ayurvedic management of Geriatric

Geriatric care is important for prevention and management of health problems in old age. It helps the elderly to improve quality of life and made them independent for performing their daily activities *Ayurveda* advocates wonderful approach to delay *Kala-jara* (natural ageing) and to avoid *Akala-jara* (premature ageing). *Ayurveda* gives primary importance to preventive and promotive health care and the maintenance of positive health.

The major preventive approaches for maintaining and improving the quality of life include individualized specific measures like *Dinacharya*, *Ratricharya*, *Rutucharya*, *Hitakara* and *Matravata ahara*, *Sadvritta-palana*, *Rasayana* etc. These measures can retard the process of ageing. Furthermore, *Rasayana* therapy, practices of *yoga*, time to time *panchakarma* and various herbal drugs are very effective methods for geriatric health care in present time.

Acharya Charak described *vayasthapana gana* which, is having power of rejuvenation. This *gana* contains drugs which have *Rasayana* properties that help to inhibit tissue degeneration and stop progress of disease ^[13]. The drug, which sustains the youth stage and prevents the Aging process, is called as *vayahsthapan*. According to *Susruta Rasayana* is *vayahsthapan* (maintaining youth), provide longevity, immunity against diseases and improves mental and intellectual competence. . According to *Chakrapani*, the drug that stabilizes the effective youth of the body is known as *vayahsthapan* ^[14]. *Dalhana* has also explained the word "Vayasthpana" by giving its two meanings of "Vayasthpana": (1) it enables the person to live a full life span of 100 years. (2) It makes the man to live young for a long period thus prevents the *Jara* ^[15]. *Acharya Charak* mentioned *Vayasthapana Mahakashaya* dravyas in *Sutrasthana* and said the drugs which prevents ageing process is known as *Vayasthapana*.

Materials and Methodology

Material

Information regarding Ageing, *Jara* and its management in our ancient Samhitas was collected along with Google search. *Vayasthapan gana* drugs were studied in detail from *Charak Samhita Sutrasthana 4* chapter, its commentaries and various books of *Dravyaguna*.

Methodology

Vayasthapan Gana Mahakashaya

अमृताऽभयाधात्रीमुक्ताश्वेताजीवन्त्यतिरसा

मण्डूकपर्णीस्थिरापुनर्नवा इति दशेमानी
वयःस्थापनानि भवन्ति ॥ च. सु. ४/१८

1. *Amruta (Guduchi) (Tinospora cordifolia)*

Guna – *Snigdha, Laghu, Mrudu, Rasa* – *Tikta, Katu, Kashaya, Vipak* – *Madhur, Virya* – *Ushna, Karma* – *Tridoshaghna, Vedanasthapan, Dipan, Pachan, Ampachan, Anuloman, Balya, Hrudya, Rasayana, Raktaprasadan.*

Presence of the *guru* and *snigdha guna* are nutritive in action, being similar in quality to *rasa dhatu*. The *ushna Virya* not only stimulates correct digestive fire treating *mandaagni* and *vishamaagni* but coupled with its *tikta rasa* it does not aggravate *pitta* whilst digesting *ama* – toxins and the post-digestive action of *madhura* indicate that the action of the herb is more anabolic than catabolic in nature and from an energetic perspective it counters the catabolic nature of ageing. It contains many different chemicals that affect the body. Some of these chemicals have an antioxidant effect. While other might increases the ability of body's immune system. The '*Rasayana*' accords longevity, enhance the memory, improve the health, bestows youth, better complexion, voice, energy and lustre the skin. So it is one of the most effective *Rasayana* and rejuvenative.

2. *Abhaya (Haritaki) (Terminalia chebula)*

Guna – *Ruksha, Laghu, Rasa* – *Kashaya pradhan pancharasa, Vipak* – *Madhur, Virya* – *Ushna, Prabhav* – *Tridoshahar Karma* – *Tridoshahar, Vedanasthapan, Dipan, Pachan, Anuloman.*

It is recorded as being more *vata* pacifying and used in extensively in disorders of *vata*. This may be due to the *ushna virya* and *madhura vipaka*, both of which counter *vata*. It is called *Pathya* that means removing any obstructive material and clarifying the path (*srotasa*). It is revered for its rejuvenative action hence it is recommended for long term intake being combined with various agents during the different seasonal changes to promote and fortify its rejuvenative properties. It is also known as '*Digestive Rasayana*' by eliminating the waste products from the tissues/organs, particularly G.I.tract. *Terminalia chebula* Retz. Possess, Antioxidant, antidiabetic, gentle purgative.

3. *Dhatri (Amalaki) (Embelica officinalis)*

Guna – *Laghu, Ruksha, Rasa* – *Lavan rahat Pancharasa Amla pradhan, Vipak* – *Madhur, Virya* – *Shita, Karma* – *Agnidipan, Ampachan, Anuloman, Prajasthapan, vrushya, Rasayan, Medhya, Balya.*

Amalaki is a rejuvenative to the *pitta dosha*, via its cooling quality and *virya*, and due to its *madhura vipaka*. It is also balancing to *vata* and *kapha*. Its *vata* pacifying action due *amla rasa* and *madhura vipaka* is expressed in the anabolic action as it supports the building and strengthening of tissues countering degeneration associated with ageing, decrease the catabolic process and thus postpones ageing. Therefore, they are known as '*Vayasthapak Rasayana*' (Adaptogenic tonic).

4. *Ukta (Rasna) (Pluchea lanceolata)*

Guna – Guru, **Rasa** – Tikta, **Vipak** – Katu, **Virya** – Ushna.

Rasna has *vata* pacifying action can be seen in the *Guru guna* and the *ushna virya*. *Vata* is dissociative in nature and this is also a causative factor of *jara*. Charak said ‘*Rasna vataharanama*’ in *Agraysangrahaniya Adhyaya*. So it is best drug, palliative for *vata*. *Pluchea lanceolata* possesses Immunomodulator properties.

5. *Shweta (Aparajita) (Clitoria klcio)*

Guna – Tikshna, Laghu, **Rasa** – Tikta, Katu, Kashaya, **Vipak** – Katu, **Virya** – Shita, **Prabhav** – Tridoshaghna, **Karma** – Tridoshaghna, Dipan, Pachan, Krumighna, Vishapaha.

Clitoria klcio possesses tranquilizing effect on the brain hence it is used in the brain weakness. Has an antibacterial properties.

6. *Jivanti (Leptadenia reticulata)*

Guna – Laghu, Snigdha, **Rasa** – Madhur, **Vipak** – Madhur, **Virya** – Shita, **Karma** – Tridoshaghna, Balya, Rasayan, Snehan, Vatanuloman, Grahi, Raktapittashamak, Shukrastambhan, Mutral.

Having the main feature of having *snigdha* quality, *madhura rasa*, *shita virya* and *madhura vipaka*, indicates that this herb is building and strengthen in its actions supporting the *kapha dosha* in maintaining stability of the tissues. The nutritive effect supports the formation of *rasa dhatu* and *ojas* maintaining health and immunity, providing strength and energy and nourishes the remaining *dhatu*s. *Leptadenia reticulata* possesses Anti-fungal and antiseptic properties.

7. *Atirasa (Shatavari) (Asparagus racemosus)*

Guna – Guru, Snigdha, Mrudu, **Rasa** – Madhur, Tikta, **Vipak** – Madhur, **Virya** – Shita, **Karma** – Vata-Pittaghna, Shamak,

Balya, Dipan, Shoolghna, Bruhan, Rasayan, Shukravruddhikar.

Shatavari madhura, *tikta rasa* and *shita virya* is pacifying to *pitta* and *vata* is pacified by the *madhura rasa*, *guru* and *snigdha* qualities and *madhura vipaka*. It is a nourishing herb to *rasa dhatu* observed in its galactagogue action as breast milk is an *upadhatu* of *rasa* hence exhibits the quality of *rasa* in its production. It is a building and nourishing herb countering the wasting of tissues. *Asparagus racemosus* Antioxident, hepatoprotective, antiulcer, antidepressant, hypoglycemic properties. Immunomodulatory activity.

8. *Mandukaparni (Centella asiatica)*

Guna – Laghu, **Rasa** – Tikta, Kashaya, Madhur, **Vipak** – Madhur, **Virya** – Shita, **Karma** – Tridoshashamak, Hrudya, Rasayan, Vayasthapan, Raktaprasadan, Raktastambhan, Ampachan, Medhya.

Mandukaparni promotes circulation to the peripheral tissues as well as the brain therefore known as ‘*Medhya Rasayana*’ (Brain Tonic). Its action as a *Vayasthapan* relates directly to the actions on the mind as it promotes memory recall, concentration and reduces stress. Its actions is circulation and blood vessel health can also be associated with antiaging properties. *Centella asiatica* possesses Oxidative stress, adaptogen, detoxifier nervine tonic Properties.

9. *Sthira (Shalparani) (Desmodium gangeticum)*

Guna – Guru, Snigdha, **Rasa** – Madhur, **Vipak** – Madhur, **Virya** – Shita, **Krama** – Tridoshaghna, Dipan – Pachan, Anuloman, Bruhan, Vrushya, Mutral, Rasayan, Balya.

The energetic profile of the herb suggests that it is a building strengthening herb that nourishes the *kapha* aspect of the *doshas* whilst it’s *ushna virya* guards against the excess formation of *kledaka kapha* in the stomach. The herb is a nervine and cardiogenic effective in treating heart conditions caused by mental stress such as heart palpitation.

Desmodium gangeticum DC. nervine and cardiogenic effective in treating heart conditions caused by mental stress.

10. Punarnava (*Boerhavia diffusa*)

Guna – Shweta - Laghu, Ruksha, Sara
Rasa – Katu, Madhur, Tikta, Kashaya,
Vipak – Katu, **Virya** – Ushna, **Rakta** –
Guna – Laghu, **Rasa** – Tikta, **Vipak** –
 Katu, **Virya** – Shita, **Karma** – Tridoshaghna,
 Dipan, Anuloman, Rechan, Mutral,
 Shothaghna, Vayasthapan, Rasayan.

Punarnava's laghu, ruksha qualities with ushana virya counters the qualities of ama – toxins. It is an effective rejuvenative of the urinary system which promotes the functions of the kidney and improves the regenerating capacity of the nephrons (a functional unit of the kidneys).

Boerhavia diffusa Linn used as immunomodulator, adaptogen, anti-stress, antiinflammatory.

All of these dravyas having capability to stable the process ageing and protect body from ageing disorders before time. If a person takes these herbal drugs regularly, become youth for longer time, so these dravyas are known as 'Rasayana'. Others may call it as one which provides more than 100 years of healthy life. (Dalhana Su. Su.1). in present day 'Jara' is coming in early age in people. This is a result of Dhatushaya. The Vayasthapan drugs are used in prevent these early age symptoms. Acharya Charaka considered 'Amlaki' as the best vayasthapan dravya.

Discussion and Conclusion

Aging is a continuous, progressive and inevitable phase of human life. According to Ayurveda swabhava and kala are responsible for the Aging. In old age vatadosha is physiologically in a dominant state and rasadi dhatus are in a deficient state. Ayurveda advocates a wonderful approach to delay Kala-jara (natural Aging) and to avoid Akala-jara (premature Aging). Vayasthapan drugs. Rasayana is the

measure by which one gets Rasa, Raktadi dhatus in its best condition, which establishes the age (Vayasthapan), increases the life span (Ayuskar), intelligence (Medha) and strength (Bala) as well as it enables the person to get rid of the diseases. Thus, it can be said that Ayurveda is helpful in delaying Aging process and minimizing the intensity of problems occurring in old age with its management. Hence this present review on the Vayasthapan mahakashaya dravya and its potential uses in Geriatric care provide information that all of these dravyas having capability to stable the process ageing before time and protect body and protect geriatric disorders in old age. In Ayurveda these drugs are grouped as Vayasthapan Drugs. The various types of Rasayana therapy are useful for specific as well as general use of it. Both dravyabhuta and adavyabhuta form of rasayanas are important for promote general well being and in specific conditions relating to geriatrics. If a person takes these herbal drugs regularly, become youth for longer time, so these dravyas are known as 'Rasayana'. Others may call it as one which provides more than 100 years of healthy life. (Dalhana Su. Su.1). Acharya Charaka considered 'Amlaki' as the best vayasthapan dravya. Modern research also covered a lot of pharmacological screening of most of these rasayana and vayasthapan herbs. The possible mechanisms by which action of Rasayana can be interpreted with modern aspects are as follows Immunomodulatory action - Prevents recurrent infection, expelling the damaged cells. Adaptogenic action - Maintains the balance between mind and body. Anti aging action Encourages the growth of new cells.

It is recommended that, there is a wide scope of research on Ayurvedic Vayasthapan drugs to prove their efficacy in Geriatrics.

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Cite this article:

A review - role of Vayahsthan Gana Mahakashaya in aging / geriatrics

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Ayurline: International Journal of Research In Indian Medicine 2019; 3(4) : 1 - 7