

**ROLE OF AHARA (DIET) IN JARAWASTHA AS A RASAYANA WSR TO GERIATRIC****Dr. Jeetendra Kumar Jain<sup>1\*</sup> and Dr. Ramteertha Sharma<sup>2</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

Ayurveda science has addressed geriatric health issues under a heading “Jara”. Ayurveda science basically aims at promotion of health of individual and management of diseases. That’s why the foremost classic of Ayurveda, the Charakasamhita begins its Chikitsasthana with Rasayanachikitsa. Use of Rasayan therapy in “Jara Janya Vyadhi” works at primary level of our biological system as well as it saves the patient from side effects of modern medicine. Good nutrition means “maintaining a nutritional status that enables us to grow well and enjoy good health. Those who take proper diet live a long life. Proper maintenance of the power of digestion is also depends upon the proper diet.

**KEYWORD:** Jarawastha, Geriatric disease, Life style, Ahara, Diet, Nutrition, Prevention, Rasayan.**INTRODUCTION**

The term geriatrics is derived Greek word, Geri - old age and iatrics - care. It is the branch of medicine concerned with the care and treatment of elderly. The word geriatric has also a close link with the Sanskrit word jiryadi' which means degenerated.

Ayurveda, the Indian traditional holistic health science has got the potential for prevention of diseases by promotion of health and management of diseases occurring in old age. It has a focused branch called Rasayana (Rejuvenation) which deals with the problems related to ageing and methods to counter the same. Geriatrics or Jara Chikitsa or Rasayana in Ayurveda is a unique therapeutic methodology to delay ageing and to minimize the intensity of problems occurring this degenerative phase of one's life.

Ahara is considered as Mahabheshaja. Food is vital breath or sustainer of life, thus all the living being of universe rush towards food; Complexion, perspicuity, good voice, longevity, brilliancy, happiness, satisfaction, nourishment, strength, energy and intellect all are depend upon food. Food is one among the three sub pillars - Ahara, Nidra and Brahmacharya, which support the body itself. Here, Ahara, has been enumerated first, which shows its importance.

Daily consumptions of Hita, Avirudha, Satmya and Nitya Sheelaniya Ahara makes the person disease free condition, so one should plan diet according to the Asta Ahara Vidhi Visesaayatana. Acharya Charaka and

Vagbhata explained the Nitya sevaniya Dravyas which is similar to the balance diet. To bring global attention towards Ayurvedic system of medicine in concern to nutritional programmed in our system, a great interest has to be focused on the role of dietary factors in the promotion of health.

**BALANCE DIET IN AYURVEDA**

Ideal food is nothing but the food which is necessary for maintenance of health, proper body growth & development. It is also described as “Balance Diet”. Balance diet is defined as one which contains a variety of food in such quantities and proportions that the need for energy, amino acid, vitamins, minerals, fat, carbohydrate and nutrients is adequately met for maintaining health, vitality and general wellbeing and also makes a small provision for extra nutrients to with stand short duration of leanness.

The concepts of balance diet are mentioned in Charaka Samhita, under things which are always conducive for health and should be consumed regularly for the maintenance of health. According to Acharya Charaka the list of foods those are advisable to consume daily are Shashtika-shali (rice grown in 60 days), Godhuma (wheat), Yava (barley), Mudga (green gram), Saindhava (rock salt), Amalaki (Emblica officinalis), Antarikshajala or Divyodaka (rain water), Ghrita (ghee), cow milk, Madhu (honey), JangalaMamsa (meat of animals from arid land) can be correlated as balance diet in today's era.

## THE PHENOMENON OF AGEING

Ageing is essentially a physiological phenomenon which results because of time bound inherent evolutionary processes by the evolutionary changes occurring in the mind-body system. Such changes begin right in the beginning of life and get more and more complex with advancing chronological age.

The main issue in geriatric care is not merely the concern about the physiological phenomenon which is inevitable; rather it is more the medical health problems and diseases specifically afflicting an individual in old age warranting medical management in order to sustain a comfortable and healthy ageing.

### 1. Concept of Vriddhavastha (later stage of life)

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. According to Ayurveda the lifespan of an individual is divided into three parts known as Vaya. These are Balavastha (childhood), which lasts up to the age of 16 years; Madhyavastha (young and middle age), which lasts from the age of 16 years to 60–70 years; and Vriddhavastha or Jirnavstha (old age), which refers to the period after 60 or 70 years. Thus, every person will pass through a period when various decaying changes will take place, and this time period is known as Vriddhavastha. This stage is characterized by decay in the body, Dhatu (various bodily 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 Vata Dosha (one of the three physiological body factors). The major physical changes seen at this time are wrinkling of skin, graying of hair, baldness, and a diminishing ability to do physical work. The diseases that complicate this stage are Kasa (cough), Shvasa (asthma), and so on.

### Vriddhavastha may be of two types

Kalaja Jara (if it manifests after the age of 60 – 70 years) or untimely. Akalaja Jara may result due to aggravation of Dosha and Pitta Dosha. Therefore, excessive utilization of all the causes of Vata–Pitta aggravation may lead to untimely aging. Some instances are causes of Rajayakshma (a syndrome with deficient immunity), carelessness regarding prescribed regimen of tryopstambha (diet, sleep, and coitus), and causes of Ojo-Kshaya (deficient immunity), excessive and single use of Amla, Lavana, Katu, Tikta, and Kashaya Rasa in diet.

## AYURVEDIC UNDERSTANDING OF GERIATRICS

Ayurveda has a crucial branch of medicine called Rasayana (Rejuvenation) which exclusively deals with the issues associated to ageing and methods to contravene the same. Geriatrics or Jara Chikitsa or

Rasayana in Ayurveda is a method to slow down the aging process in human being during the degenerative phase of one's life. This branch is among eight branches of Ayurveda. It is called Jara Chikitsa for which Rasayana is indicated. Rasayana is normally advised during this degenerative phase which starts from around 45 yrs both in male and female. Ayurveda treats this disorders by two methods. One is a drastic or radical approach which revives the whole metabolic process of the body by excreting the toxins from the system by three to four months organized process. It is called as Kutipraveshika Rasayana. The Kutipraveshika remains as a textual matter of Ayurveda than a practical process of present day relevance due to its difficult limiting prerequisites. The second approach of Ayurveda, which is pretty prevalent today, is called as Vataatapika Rasayana - which can go along with the normal day to day life. This sorts of Rasayana is especially important within the current scenario because it features an easy mode of administration with none restrictive pre-conditions.

## PREVENTIVE AND CURATIVE MEASURES FOR GERIATRICS

Acharya Charak says that the disease before its commencement or at an early stage, experiences long-lasting happiness". Geriatric problems are best confronted by preventive measures than curative ones. Therefore geriatrics has to be treated much before the commencement of old age. The ideal time for treating the old age problems is youth. Discipline in young age prevents geriatric problems. By adopting a healthier lifestyle, the risk of a whole range of diseases can be reduced. These factors are diet and nutrition, exercise, social activities.

## AHARA (DIETETICS / AGEING AND NUTRITION)

Elderly people have different nutritional requirements compared to the normal adult population. With increasing age, people become more vulnerable to malnutrition for many reasons including Arochaka (anorexia) due to ageing, medication, disease like Smritinasha (dementia), Manovasada (depression), stroke, Kampadosha (Parkinson disease) and other neurological disorders, poor dentition, delayed gastric emptying, illfitting dentures, swallowing problems, oral infections, taste changes and diminished smell sensation.

There is no change in absorption of fats and carbohydrates, whereas vitamin D and calcium absorption is impaired, which leads to their deficiency. Calcium intake along with vitamin D is necessary to prevent bone mineral loss in elderly. Diet containing dairy products, fish, legumes, nuts, eggs, etc. are full of vitamin D and calcium. In addition, organic calcium like Pravala Pishti, Pravala Pancamrita, Kukkutandatvak Bhasma and Karpada Bhasma etc. may be given as medication. Folic acid deficiency is more common in elderly. Diet containing Fruits, roasted cereals like gram,

peanuts, pulses etc. Sprouted cereals, Puffed rice, butter milk (mattha) are considered as healthy food items should be given to the elderly. It is needed to change our style of food as Consume a diet rich in vegetables and fruits (all colored), avoid eating more high calorie fruits (mango, banana, etc), whole fruit is better than fruit juice because it contains fiber. Vegetables which are green, reduces fat and blood sugar level. And have sufficient water such as 3 to 3.5 lit/day. Prepare food by boiling, roasting, steaming, baking and avoid frying.

Following points may be considered while planning/ advising dietary and other life style regimen in all ages (especially in old age).

- ❖ Liquid intake should be more frequent and in small amount
- ❖ The food should be tasty, nutritious, fresh and good in appearance
- ❖ Too spicy, salty and pungent food should be avoided
- ❖ It should neither be very hot nor very cold
- ❖ Heavy food can be prescribed in a limited quantity
- ❖ Heavy food should not be given at night.
- ❖ Heavy physical work should be avoided after meals
- ❖ Mind should be peaceful while eating
- ❖ Eating only whenever hungry and avoidance of over eating
- ❖ Inclusion of sufficient amount of vegetables and fruits in diet.
- ❖ Daily intake of vegetable soup and fruit juices
- ❖ Milk and ghee are the agryaushadha (drug of choice) of vardhakya (senility).

#### UTILITY OF CONSIDERATION OF FOOD

प्राणाः प्राणमृतामन्नमन्नं लोकोऽभिधावति वर्णः प्रसादः सौख्यं जीवितं प्रतिभा सुखं ।

तुष्टिः पुष्टिः बलं मेधा सर्वमन्ने प्रतिष्ठितिम् । लौकिके मर्मे यद्वृत्तौ स्वर्गती यच्च वैदिकम् ॥

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Food sustains the life of living beings. All living beings in the universe require food. Complexion, clarity, good voice, longevity, geniuses, happiness, satisfaction, nourishment, strength and intellect are all conditioned by food. Professional activities leading to happiness in this world, Vedic rituals leading to abode in heaven and observance of truth, Brahmacharya leading to salvation are all based on food.

#### THE RASAYANA THERAPY AND ITS MODE OF ACTION

Rasayana (Rasa = nutrition + Ayana = circulation and promotion) especially deals with the science of nutrition, geriatric care and rejuvenation. The strength of Ayurveda in the context of Geriatric care is Rasayana therapy. Rasayana stands as an answer in preventing premature ageing and to solve the problems due to ageing; it also ensures healthful longevity including mental health and resistance against various geriatric disease conditions. There are specific Rasayana for different age groups, which help in restoring the loss of specific bio-values of respective ages. This, Rasayana are also classified as.

**A. MEDHYA RASAYANA:** Rasayana drugs that act as brain tonics, e.g. Bramhi, Shankhapushpi, Jatamansi, Mandukaparni, Yashtimadhu and Guduchi.

**B. VARDHAMANA RASAYANA:** Rasayana given in a measured step-up dosage or in step ladder fashion from a minimum to a maximum dose subsequently tapering, e.g. Vardhamana Pippali Rasayana.

**C. DRONI-PRAVESHKA RASAYANA:** A very remarkable form of Rasayana. In this condition a person is made to consume stomach full of the juice of medicated herbs and made to lie down in a wooden box for a period of 6 months.

Besides Charak has also classified Rasayana as three types viz. Curative (Vyadhi Parimokshya), Promotive (Swasthasya Urjaskara), Preventive (Pratishedhatmaka).

#### CONCLUSION

To bring global attention towards Ayurvedic system of medicine in concern to nutritional programmed in our system, a great interest has to be focused on the role of dietary factors in the promotion of health. To live a long and healthy life is every individual's wish. Every man scare, a multifactorial and inevitable biological phenomenon is ageing. The proportion of elderly people is constantly increasing along with age related diseases. Even though it is impossible to adopt all the things certain changes in life style like practice of rejuvenating diet, medicine, yoga will certainly help to prevent many diseases as well as to overcome many problems related to ageing. Due to changing lifestyle and thus not able to follow the rules of dietetics human beings have led to an emergence of varied problems for the elderly in India. It is obvious that the process of ageing was elaborately described in ayurvedic texts and a separate medical discipline called Rasayana tantra was developed which described a variety of methods and measures to promote healthy longevity.

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