



Review Article

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AYURVEDIC APPROACH FOR MANAGEMENT OF AGEING AND RELATED DISORDER

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ABSTRACT

World Health Day 2012 was celebrated on April 7, 2012 to mark the anniversary of the founding of the WHO in 1948. This year's theme was "Active ageing: Good health adds life to years." As the life expectancy of individuals has improved due to better health care delivery system, an old age boom is anticipated in 21st century. Problems related to old age are also likely to be increased largely.

Ayurvedic seers and sages were well aware of problems of ageing since long back. Old age (jara) is described as a spontaneous disease in Ayurvedic texts. Gradual weakening of normal physiological functions, lowered metabolic activities and gradual loss of body strength characterizes it. This can be accompanied with disturbance in mental faculties. Human starts thinking that this is inevitable and he / she must reconcile with old age but it has been observed, that the above mentioned symptoms of senility manifest as early as in forty or fifty years of age. This sort of premature aging is definitely a stage when one must think of adopting some prophylaxis so that he / she may save himself / herself from getting in grip of old age.

Keywords: Ageing, Free Radicals Jara, Vaya

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda the human body has been described as a living subject where the wear and tear is a continuous and perpetual phenomenon. Regeneration and degeneration go simultaneously right from the neonatal life to young age where growth and development occurs, afterwards this process is altered and degeneration takes upper hand. As the age advances body becomes fragile, digestion and metabolism gets weakened and the body succumbs to various diseases.

Jara

Ageing is known as "Jarā" and defined as that which has become old by the act of wearing out "jīryati iti jarā". It is synonymy as "vārdhakya" meaning increasing age¹. Ayurveda divides human life into childhood (up to the age 16 years); youth and middle age [from 16 to 60 years (Charaka) or 70 years (Sushruta)] and exhibits progressively the traits of growth (vivardhamana, 16–20 years of age), youth (youvana, 20–30 years), maturity (sampoornata, 30–40 years), deterioration (parihani, 40 years onwards) which gradually sets in up to 60 years, old age, wherein after 60–70 years the body elements, sense organs, strength and so forth begin to decay².

Signs of jaravastha

Many scientists had tried and still trying to search out the mystery of Ageing through certain theories. Our Acharya had also thought about this and given the way to think about the problem. According to Sushrut³ "Signs of Jaravastha" can be tabled in the following-

Dhatu kshaya	Progressive deterioration of body tissues
Indriya kshaya	Loss of perceptive power of sense organ
Bala kshaya	Loss of Power
Virya kshaya	Loss of semen
Utsaha kshaya	Loss of enthusiasm
Vali	Wrinkles in Skin
Palita	greying of hair
Khalitya	Baldness
Kasa, shavas	Cough, Dysnoea
Sarva kriyasu asamartha	Inability to perform motor activity
Krsata	Emaciation
Manda virya	Loss of vigor
Manda buddhi	Loss of intellect
Manda bala	Loss of strength
Kampa	Tremors
Aruchi	Anorexia
China patra sarva	Husky voice as broken pot
Gaurava	Heaviness
Arati	Restlessness
Mandagni	Loss of appetite

Just reverse to all signs Maharh is like Chyavan, Bhardwaj, and Vashishta lived very healthy life and attained the age of more than hundred years. They got success by reviving their youthful medha (intellect), smiriti (memory), dhriti (tolerance), niramayata (freedom from disease) dirghayu (longevity) and jatharagni (digestive fire).

Concept of ageing as per Ayurveda

Ayurveda has used two very important terms in reference to age and ageing. The term Vaya indicates the milestones of Ayu, whereas the term vridhaashtya means exhausted Ayu leading to Jaravastha. Charak, Sushrut, Vagbhatt, all have observed definite landmarks or Vaya for qualifying stages of Ayu. The terms used for this classification are

Alpaya, Madhyayu and Dirghayu. Vaya is that part of life, which has already been enjoyed or is being enjoyed. Ayurveda is a treasure of scientific knowledge to get stress free, healthy, prosperous and dynamic life. It describes the life styles of Hitayu, Ahitayu, Sukhayu and dukhayu⁴. Ayurveda deals mainly with two aspects i.e. prevention from disease and cure of disease. The preventive aspect of Ayurveda describes lifestyle to every individual to achieve Sukhayu (healthy and happy) life. This approach necessitates Ayurveda physicians to search out ways and methods to combat vridhaawashta. They made untiring efforts to control the process of Jara and Vyadhi. In Ayurveda we have two main methods for rejuvenation and longevity.

The science of rejuvenation means infusion of sufficient amount of vitality in a man, who has started showing premature signs and symptoms of ageing, this means making him turn towards his youth. The modern medical science advises use of drugs as Vitamins, Hormones, nutritional supplement and cosmetics for rejuvenation. The hazards of these methods are not the hidden facts. Hence, holistic science suggests a number of strategies along with medications for combating the process of ageing and various diseases arising out of it. Along with this Ayurveda holds the view of, a strong will power, which plays a major role in combating the problems of Ageing.

Strategies for management of ageing

The urge to live, the fear of death, the desire of youth, the distaste for old age and the quest for Rejuvenation have always interested mankind from antiquity to modern times. Ageing is a deleterious, progressive, universal and thus far irreversible. Constant efforts have been made to understand the process of Ageing and slow the process of ageing. The strategies mentioned below can achieve and maintain Arogya and Tarunya, ruling out the principle of Shiryate iti Shariram.

Dincharya (Daily Regimen)

In Sanskrit, the word 'Dincharya' ^{5,6} means daily routine. According to Ayurveda, one should follow the Dincharya in order to lead a healthy and disease-free life. Every day, two cycles of change pass through the human body, each bringing a Vata, Pitta, or Kapha predominance. Based on the cycles of vata, pitta and kapha, our daily routine should be divided into morning, noon, evening/twilight, dinner and bedtime. In the Ayurvedic texts, it is written that a person should wake up two hours prior to the sunrise, (brahma muhurat), started by eliminating the colon and the bladder, sipping of water (achamana), cleaning teeth and oral cavity (dantdhavan, kaval and gandusa) followed by a thorough cleaning of the senses - ears, eyes, mouth etc by anjana, dhumpna, nasya. This should be followed by an self oil massage (Abhyanga). Exercise in the morning, just after the massage, helps to rejuvenate the body and soul.

Daily physical activity can help to prevent heart disease and stroke by strengthening heart muscle, lowering blood pressure, raising HDL levels (good cholesterol) and lowering LDL levels (bad cholesterol), improving blood flow, and increasing heart's working capacity. Physical activity helps to reduce body fat by building or preserving muscle mass and improving the body's ability to use

calories. When physical activity is combined with proper nutrition, it can help control weight and prevent obesity, a major risk factor for many diseases as diabetes, Hypertension and cardiac diseases by increasing muscle strength and endurance and improving flexibility and posture, regular exercise helps to prevent back pain.

Psychological Effects

Regular physical activity can improve mood and the way one feel about himself/herself. Researchers also have found that exercise is likely to reduce depression and anxiety and help to manage stress. Bath with Luke warm water is advised after physical exercise for cleaning of body and by doing so, tiredness, sweating, drowsy and thirst vanishes whereas appetite, age and strength increases.

The Dinacharya makes one to lead a healthy and disciplined life. According to the latest studies in the field of medical science, people who stick to the daily routine are more fit than those, who do not have a particular time to perform their everyday activities. It is said that Dinacharya reduces the stress level to a great extent. In addition to this, the person's body is purified and detoxified.

Nishacharya (Night Regimen)

Nidra is one of the most important pillar of life. Sleeping is essential for us to live a balanced life. As we recognize sleeping when we recharge our batteries. It is the physiological condition of the body, sense and motor organs and mind. When the brain is tired and exhausted, our sense organs get distracted and lose focus in what one is doing. Before going to sleep, relax and feel comfortable about self. Offer prayers for God. Remember to align head in the east (purva) or south (dakshin) direction. Think of a religious message before going to sleep. Since sleeping is also a way to repair damaged cells^{7,8}.

Ritucharya

This word is the combination of two words i.e. ritu meaning seasons and Charya meaning routine^{9,10} thus complete term meaning is routine which is to be followed in different seasons. Ayurveda focuses on living in tune with nature. It recognizes the intimate relationship between the individual and the environment. The existence and well being of a person depends largely on the continuous adjustments and interactions with the external and internal factors of the environment. Ayurveda recognizes that seasonal changes have a profound effect on our health, and recommends many helpful suggestions for how one can adapt lifestyle to stay balanced in each season. Ayurveda made the personified specific suggestions because one lifestyle or diet cannot suit everybody as people have different constitutional make up.

It maintains the climatic homologation in form of dosh samya (equilibrium) in different seasons to promote Swasthritta (preventive and social medicine) on which Ayurveda has laid a great stress since prevention is better than cure.

Saddvritta

It comes from two words "Sadd" which means good and vritta which means solution. It aims to develop the right balance between one's mind and body for the growth of a

person. It is an all-around science that promotes the total harmony of the body system where people socialize and live. There are three major types of mansik bhav (mind expression) in Saddvritta^{11,12}. They are rajsik, tamasik and satwik. Amongst these three, it has been said that the satwik is the most powerful since it can help a person achieve an eternal power. Tamas and rajas are destructive mind characteristics that make wrong judgment and result to various types of diseases. People need specific codes that are gained by doing Saddvritta in increasing satwik mind quality. A sound mental health is not just the absence of any mental disorders, but also the ability to keep up with the challenges one is encountering in late phase of his/her life. Mental health is as important as physical health in elderly persons.

Non - Suppressible and suppressible urges

Natural urges like thirst and hunger are considered as the Vega, whereas Adharniya means non-suppressible, thereby the term refers to natural urges that should not be suppressed. The physiological functions of the body are related to some or the other natural urge thus making the suppression of these urges lead to a pathological state that pave way to many non communicable disease in long run.

Dharniyavega (Description of suppressible urges)

Dharniya means the one that is to be suppressed and vega means urge i.e. the urges natural or developed that need to be suppressed by every living being are described in Ayurveda^{13,14} as follows

- Lobha (greediness)
- Shoka (depression)
- Bhaya (cowardliness)
- Krodh (anger)
- Ahankar (ego)
- Nirlajata (shamelessness)
- Irshya (jealousy)

These are suppressible urges of mind necessary for sound mental health.

Balanced diet

Balanced diet is one of the key of Ayurvedic tools, for promoting good health. The practitioners of the 'Science of Life' (Ayurveda) suggest that the diets for people are individualized based on many factors such as their age, gender, the doshic tendencies, the strength of body tissues, digestive fires and the level of Ama (toxins) in their body. The effect of right and wrong type of diet is clearly mentioned by the Ayurveda. This helps people to have an idea about what to eat and the right way of eating food.

Apart from a wholesome diet Ayurveda also suggest that one should follow some basic rules, when it comes to consumption of food. According to Ayurveda, food should be consumed only after the digestion of the previous meal, because it promotes proper digestion, appetite and the right manifestation of the natural urges. Add fruits, vegetables and greens in daily diet to maintain health in old age.

Tripods of life: In Ayurveda, food (Ahar), sleep (Nidra) and brahmacharya (Controlled sex) are regarded as the three pillars or tripods of healthy living¹⁵. It is important for our body to be adjusted to timely intake of good quality and proper food, regular sleeping habits and controlled indulgence in sex in order to ensure long and

healthy life. It is thus vital to have a regular systematic food and sleeping habit so that the body has a regularized automatic system of maintenance. It is even mandatory to maintain a balanced sex life and avoid extra indulgence worldly life. This practice of celibacy along with a proper daily regime not only promotes life and preserves health but also give enrichment to the soul and other cognitive organs along with the mind which can prevent various ailments of old age.

Dhayana and Yoga therapy

Means an attempt to unite individual consciousness with the cosmic divine or supreme consciousness. This is a strategy to totally integrate physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual aspects of human personality. Dhyana helps in "Chitta Vritti Nirodha"¹⁶. Both attempts ensure Arogya to achieve the goal of life i.e. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha¹⁷.

Pranayama

It has a salutary effect on general health and vitality. Pranayama¹⁸ helps to procure oxygenated blood to various organs and body tissues and elimination of waste product in form of carbon dioxide. Pranayama helps to improve bio-energy and proper conjugation of respiratory and nervous system.

Panchkarma

Ayurveda heals through purification and rejuvenation therapies. These therapies aim at promoting longevity in life by guiding the individual in the prevention of disease. Panchakarma¹⁹ therapy, which is effective in cleansing of body toxins, plays a pivotal role in this. The five natural physical treatment processes include Vaman or medicated vomiting, Virechana or medicated purgation, Basti or medicated enema, Nasya or medicated treatment through the route of nose and Raktamokshana or bloodletting.

The detoxification process is necessary for eliminating the toxic waste from the organic system and thereby assuring smooth and natural organic function. It takes the responsibility of the purification and balancing the complete organic system that can ensure natural wellbeing as well as health. So the benefits that one experience through Panchakarma should not be considered in regard to treatment of some particular diseases or disorders, but rather in regard to rendering total health benefits that would naturally combat any disorder or disease.

Rasayan

The very meaning refers to excellent nutrition and proper transportation of nutrient material through improved healthy channels to subsequent body tissue, by inducing basic changes in the body at the level of Ras, Agni and Srotas. Thus Rasayan may operate by enriching nutrition, by augmenting metabolism, by promoting microcirculation and eliminating metabolic waste. Rasayan²⁰ therapy simultaneously affects body and mind in bringing out physical and psychic improvement and prevents ill effect of ageing, increases intelligence and body resistance. There is a big treasure of Rasayan drugs i.e. shatavari, amalki, ashwagandha, shilajtu, arjun, guggul single or in combination which may prevent the deterioration and improve the quality of life. Herbs like bramhi, vacha, and shankpushpi are effective brain tonic

(medhya rasayan) for improvement of mental health and manage psychic and psychometric problems.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda also emphasizes on an ideal method of healthy living. A special section of Ayurveda, swasthavritta deals with the science of health and the code for a healthy conduct. 'Swasthavritta' which literally means 'the regime of abiding in one's own nature' is an individual's guide to the path of healthy and long life. In Ayurveda, one's body is regarded as a temple and thus, several ways are prescribed for keeping it healthy and young lifelong.

The principles of maintaining a proper well being of the body and mind are incorporated in Ayurveda inform of dincharya, Ritucharya, balanced diet and the observance of personal, moral, seasonal and spiritual conduct. These ways of living helps in healthy functioning of five sensory organs, nervous system along with other vital organs of the body. Other than this Ayurveda also prescribes Sadvritta. The right ways of living i.e. following good mental, social, religious, personal and moral conduct which may help to overcome the feeling of stress and fatigue in fast pace life. The stress is a major factor responsible for various ailments of old age. The process of ageing and process of disease are not only because of somatic changes but also due to psychoneuro-humoral changes. The Rasayan therapy bestows humankind by proving them disease free long life and helps in uplifting the quality of their life, by manipulating ageing process and disease process.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda holds that there is no magical remedy or short cut for healthy living. Instead, strict and staunch regulation of the acharyas, the principles of healthy lifestyle which include a proper routine regarding ahar, vihar and achars based on hetu (Material cause), kala (Season) and desha (Habitat) are the only ways for healthy living. Ayurveda defines the healthy state as: 'A person, whose somatic and psychic humors are in equilibrium, digestion is uniformly healthy, with normal functioning of the fundamental tissues of the body and body wastes, accompanied by the processes of the soul, cognitive organs and the mind, is said to be a healthy person.'

Therefore, these strategies indicated by Ayurveda in respect of health care of people in all phase of life especially ageing population should be religiously followed by letter and spirit. All these strategies can contribute in a big way for healthy and happy old age.

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