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Role of *Rasayana* Therapy in Geriatric Care: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is basically the science of life and longevity. In ageing *Dhatus* get degenerated due to functional and structural modifications. During old age we cannot increase the capacity of *Rasadi Dhatus*, but they can be preserved and rejuvenated. *Ayurveda*, is world's most authoritative, mind-body-spirit medicine system, gives us various concepts of the ageing phenomenon. This ancient system of medicine includes remedies for healthy ageing so as to make an optimal health and lengthen one's individual's health span by using *Rasayana* therapy. *Rasayana* therapy is a unique therapeutic science to delay ageing process and to reduce the intensity of problems occurring this elderly phase of life. According to concept of *Ayurveda* the therapy used for promoting and preserving health, increasing strength and life span in a healthy person are called *Rasayana* therapy. *Rasayana* therapy maintain the equilibrium of *Rasadi Saptadhatu* and optimum the power of body and senses to enhance intellect, memory, skin lustre, complexion, bodily glow, voice and generosity and preserve youth age. Only *Rasayana* therapy is an answer in present scenario to prevent premature ageing and to treat the manifestation due to ageing process; it also ensures healthy life span including mental health and better resistance against various geriatric disease conditions. *Rasayana* therapy also acts as antioxidants so they inhibit free radicals and delay ageing process. This review article will explore multiple aspects of ageing and longevity with the use of *Rasayana* therapy in Geriatric care.

KEYWORDS

Ayurveda, Jara, Ageing, Rasayana, Antioxidants



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INTRODUCTION

The term geriatrics is derived from Greek word, Geri-old age and iatrics-care. It is a special division of medicine related to the preventive and curative measures of elderly. Ageing is defined as a result of natural changes of the body that progressively leads to the death of individuals. It is also defined as the intrinsic, inevitable, and irreversible age-related loss of viability^{1,2}. In *Ayurveda* our body is presented as a living subject where the wear & tear phenomenon is continuous. Ageing is not a pathological condition but a physiological action like hunger, thirst and sleep. *Swabhavoparamavada* (*Swabhava* = natural and *Upama* = destruction) which means natural destructions. The concept described by *Acharya Charaka* is that there is a cause for the equilibrium and non-equilibrium state of *Rasadi Dhatu* but there is no cause for their destruction, since death following birth is a state of natural flow³. *Rasayana* therapy is a unique therapeutic science to delay ageing process and to reduce the strength of diseases which occurring this elderly phase of life. *Rasayana* therapy is a special remedial solution in present scenario to prevent premature ageing and to treat the manifestations due to ageing process; it also ensures healthy life span including mental

health and better resistance against various geriatric disease conditions.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To understand the concept of ageing.
- 2) To understand and elaborate preventive measure of *rasayana* therapy in geriatrics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Published information from several articles, of which few review articles and cross-references were collected. All publications containing original data and an adequate detailed description of methodology were considered in the present review. The literatures reviewed in this article are taken from the modern medical science journals and classics of *Ayurveda*.

PHENOMENON OF AGEING⁴

Ageing is basically a physiological process which results because of time bound inherent evolutionary processes by the evolutionary changes occurring in the mind-body system. Such changes starts right from the beginning of life and get worsen and worsen with progress of chronological age. The advancing involution ultimately progress into extreme old age and lastly end of life. So life span of individual is a time limited entity and everyone is mortal. The main point in the management of manifestations in elderly



phase of life is not merely the concern about the natural process which is not preventable; rather it is more the health issues and problems mainly affecting elderly phase of lifewarning medical intervention to enhance a blissful ageing. Thus the medical management in elderly phase of life is facing mainly two type of problems, firstly the delaying of natural ageing process and secondly the therapeutic cure of disease conditions and disorders specifically manifest in old age such as hypertension, ischemic heart disease, diabetes, senile dementia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson disease, degenerative osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, opportunistic infections, prostatic enlargement, degenerative eye diseases like cataract, a range of angiopathies, neuro-degenerative diseases and senile psychoses which results mass morbidity in elderly phase of life.

AYURVEDA AND SCIENCE OF AGEING

1. Kala Parinama:

Kala Parinama (changes due to time) is one of the most important factors that affects ageing as it includes all creation in itself. *Kala Parinama* refers to the physical and mental transformation that occurs as a function of time and as we age⁵. Time affects all individuals from beginning of life till the end, and this period of time is called *Ayush* (life span). *Ayurveda* divides

Ayush into various stages of life, *Bala*-16 years, *Vivardhamana*-16-20 years, *Youvana*-20-30 years, *Sampoornata*-30-40 years, *Parihani*-40-60 years and older adults *Vriddhavastha*⁶.

2. Prakriti:

Prakruti is concern to the nature of body constitution (*Vatadi dosas* and *satva, raj, tam*) of a subject. Thus, nature interfere a subject's strength for changes at the level of *kaayik, vaachik* and *maansik* owing to the responses with internal and external stimuli that affects the ageing process⁵.

3. Doshas:

Vatadi Doshas affects the life span at the molecular level. *Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas* are *Prana, Ojas* and *tejas* that are essential for blissful life span⁷.

4. Ahara:

It is one of the most important factors that affects ageing. A poor dietary practice like improper timing, bad habits of food mixing of inappropriate food materials with inappropriate lifestyle disturb equilibrium state of *Vatadi Doshas* leading to disease conditions and finally death⁸.

5. Achara:

Ayurveda has contributed a great concept of *Achara Rasayana* (*Ayurvedic* lifestyle modification). It is a behavioral therapy for calm mind and long life. It is a unique *Ayurvedic* concept of mind rejuvenation. It controls and maintains the circadian rhythm



of the body clock that results in good health, vitality and immunity, all of these slow the physiological ageing process⁹.

6. Agni:

Jatharagni is among the chief *agni* among all *agni* present in the body. *Jatharagni* serves as the main digestive element and is the main contributor for all anabolic and catabolic process in the body. If *Jatharagni* is not strong, the digestion of food stuff is improper that results in impaired absorption and formation of *Ama Dosha*. If *Jatharagni* is powerful then it destroys all the related tissues and resulting in degeneration of tissue. Thus, the state of *Jatharagni* influences the ageing process¹⁰.

DIMENSIONS OF GERIATRIC CARE

Management in elderly phase of life has two different areas: (a) Firstly for betterment of healthy status of life and (b) Secondly for the management of disease conditions in elderly phase of life. The most of the therapeutic science is better in terms of the second dimension, although the final outcome may not be sufficient because most of the problems in elderly phase of life are difficult to cure. Unlike the contemporary science approach of finding additional or transplantation of the body parts to enhance the healthy life span of the elderly person, *Ayurveda* relies on a number of comprehensive programs that includes yoga, *dincharya*, *ratricharya*, *ritucharya*,

achara-rasayana, *sadvritta* and *pathya apathya*, intervention for extension of healthy life span. *Ayurveda* is remarkably stronger in terms of the first dimension of the geriatric care as it has the best potential to enhance healthy status in the elderly phase of life. *Ayurveda* contributes other multiple scopes like rejuvenation and promotion of longevity in geriatric care⁴.

RASAYANA THERAPY¹¹

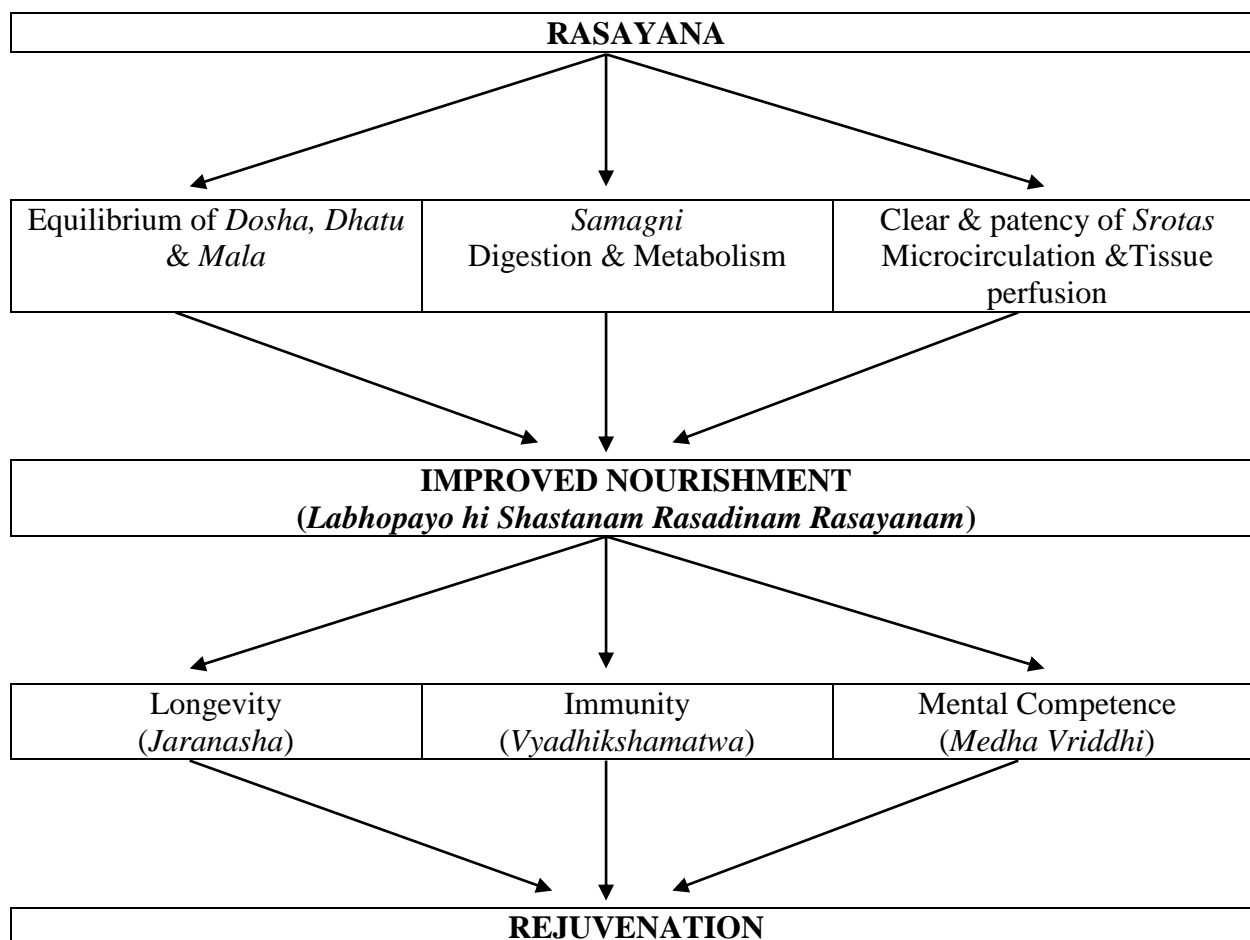
Rasayana therapy specially deals with the science of geriatric care and rejuvenation. The strongest point of *Ayurveda* in the context of geriatric care is *Rasayana* therapy. *Rasayana* therapy is a special remedial solution in present scenario to prevent premature ageing and to treat the manifestation due to ageing process; it also ensures healthy life span including mental health and better immune status against various geriatric disease conditions. The biological stimulation of *Vata Dosha* can be delayed by *Rasayana* therapy particularly by using *Vayasthapana* drugs. Ageing is progressive change related to passage of time, free radicals cause oxidative damage to different biological units which may enhance to ageing process. Certain *Rasayana* drug like *withania somnifera* prevents lipid peroxidation and oxidative protein moderation. *Rasayana* therapy also acts as antioxidant so they help in blissful ageing. Mode of action of *Rasayana* drugs



in ageing by immune stimulation, free radical destruction, promoting cellular detoxification mechanisms, repair damaged

non proliferating cells and Inducing cell-proliferation and self-renewal of damaged proliferating tissues¹¹.

MODE OF ACTION¹²



The probable mode of action of Rasayana therapy as per contemporary science is as follows-

1. Antioxidant action – *Amalaki*.
2. Immunomodulatory action – *Guduchi*.
3. Haematopoietic effect – *Amalaki*, *Bhringaraja*, *Mandura*, *LauhaBhasma*.
4. Adaptogenic action- *Ashwagandha*.

5. Antiageing action – *Ashwagandha*, *Bala*.
6. Anabolic action – *Vidarikanda*.
7. Nutritive function – *Gritha*, *Ksheera*.
8. Neuroprotective action – *Ashwagandha*, *SwarnaBhasma*, *RajataBhasma*.

INDICATIONS FOR RASAYANA^{13,14}

1. *Jitendriya*.



2. *Rasayana* enthusiastic person.
3. *Hitayu* person.
4. *Sukhayu* person.
5. *Sadhanasampanna* (rich) person.
6. *Sadavadhana* (cautious).
7. Non-addicted.
8. *Dharmika*.
9. Age between 16-70 years.
10. *Sodhita* person.
11. *Snigdha*.
12. Free from mental worries.
13. Male and female both are eligible.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS FOR RASAYANA^{13, 14}

1. *Anatmavan* (unstudy) person.
2. *Alasi* (Lazy) person.
3. *Daridra* (poor) person.
4. *Pramadi* (unstable) person.
5. *Vyasnai* (addicted) person.
6. *Papakruta* (evil) person.
7. *Bhesajapamani* (who do not respect medicine).
8. *Papi* (evil minded) person.
9. *Patita* (characterless) person.
10. *Sushrusharahita* (*asradda*) person.

CLASSIFICATION OF RASAYANA

I. According to Mode of Administration^{15, 16}

1. *Kuti Praveshika* (Indoor Management).
2. *Vatatapika* (Outdoor Management).

II. According to Achievable outcome^{15, 17}

1. *Kamya Rasayana-Prana, Medha and Shri Kamya*.
2. *Naimittika Rasayana* (Curative).
3. *Ajasrika Rasayana* (*Vayasthapana*).

III. According to Modalities¹⁵

1. *Achara Rasayana* (Behavioural modalities).
2. *Ahara Rasayana* (Dietary modalities).
3. *Dravya Rasayana* (Drug based modalities).

IV. According to Dravya¹⁵

1. *Dravyabhuta Rasayana*.
2. *Adravyabhutas Rasayana*.

PURVA KARMA BEFORE RASAYANA THERAPY¹⁸

If *Rasayana chikitsa* is taken up without performing *sodhana* of the patient, it becomes total waste work like a dirty cloth never catches the color even if it is subjected to dying of colors repeatedly. In other words *Rasayana* therapy should be initiated after *sodhana chikitsa*, only to obtain better and desired results especially under *Kuti Pravesika Rasayana* procedure.

PREVENTIVE AND THERAPEUTIC MEASURE OF RASAYANA¹⁹

Charaka and *Sushruta* have spelt out two distinct yet mutually complimentary objectives for *Ayurveda* i.e. (a) Prevention of disease and (b) Alleviation of disease when it manifests. Further *Acharya*



Charaka classified the therapeutic approaches into two- (a) The promotive therapies to preserve and promote the health; (Table 1) and (b) The restorative therapies to cure the disease and restore health, when it is disturbed (Table 2). Thus, *Rasayana* falls under the first-objective of

Ayurveda. According to him, *Rasayana* contributes to long life, lasting memory, talent, health physique, youth, luster, bright complexion, good voice, strength of body and senses, truthfulness, respect and glowing body.

Table 1 Rasayanas Recommended in Various Decades of Life²⁰

Age in yrs	Bio-values Decline	Recommended <i>Rasayana</i>
1-10	<i>Balya</i> (Childhood)	<i>Vacha, Kasmari, Svarna.</i>
11-20	<i>Vridhhi</i> (Growth)	<i>Kasmari, Bala, Ashwagandha.</i>
21-30	<i>Chhavi</i> (Complexion)	<i>Amalaki, Lauha Rasayana.</i>
31-40	<i>Medha</i> (Intelligence)	<i>Shankhapuspi, Yastimadhu, Ashwagandha, Guduchi.</i>
41-50	<i>Tvak</i> (Skin Lusture)	<i>Bhringaraja, Somaraji, Haridra.</i>
51-60	<i>Drishti</i> (Vision)	<i>Triphalaghrita, Saptamrtalauha, Kataka.</i>
61-70	<i>Shukra</i> (Semen)	<i>Kapikacchu, Ashwagandha, Musali, Milk, Ghrita.</i>
71-100	--	These age groups are not fit for <i>Rasayana karma.</i>

DISEASE SPECIFIC OR NAIMITTIKA RASĀYANA²¹

Table 2 Rasayanas Recommended in Various Diseases of Life²¹

S.N.	Diseases	Recommended <i>NaimittikaRasayana</i>
01	Diabetes Mellitus	<i>Śilajatu, Haridra</i>
02	Leprosy & Dermatoses	<i>Tuvaraka, Haridra, Somarāji</i>
03	Bronchial Asthma	<i>Haridra, Śirīśa</i>
04	Hypertension & IHD	<i>Sarpagandha, Puškara-Mūla, Arjuna</i>
05	Urinary Disorders	<i>Punarnava, Gokśura</i>
06	Arthritis	<i>Bhallātaka, Eranda, Guggulu</i>
07	Neuro-degenerative Diseases	<i>Brahmi, Aśwgandha</i>
08	Dementia	<i>Brahmi, Śankapuśpi</i>
09	Immuno-deficiency	<i>Āmalaki, Guduchi</i>
10	Cancer	<i>Bhallātaka, Āmalaki</i>

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda contributes most important role in geriatric care, as it is one among the branch of *Astanga* of *Ayurveda*. *Jara Chikitsa* has a good scope in present day scenario as a preventive tool. As mentioned earlier the qualities of *Rasayana* therapy are one which enhances the longevity, one which enhances *Smiriti*, *Medha*, which maintains *Aarogyata*, and also maintains youthfulness etc. The past few decades of

genetic and biochemical research have revealed an extensive network of molecular interactions involved in the ageing process, suggesting that a *Rasayana*-based therapeutics approach potentially more effective for delaying or reversing the ageing process. *Ayurveda* considers ageing as a natural and inevitable process and gives time-tested *Rasayan* atherapies for healthy ageing. Healthy ageing would therefore require for the individual to bring in blissful



impressions, incorporate healthy lifestyle practices and routines *Rasayana* therapy that promote good health and wellbeing, and encourage healthy transformation of the body and mind through harmonious choices and actions, *Rasayana* therapy is a unique therapeutic science to delay ageing process and to reduce the intensity of problems occurring this elderly phase of life. To be healthy in old age according to *Ayurveda* one should use of *Rasayana* in all decade of life.

CONCLUSION

Due to increased elderly population, the prevalence of geriatric specific disease conditions is also increasing. This is creating a big burden to the health care providers and the government. Traditional remedies or herbal informants of *Rasayana* care the only answer to meet out the problems. It is the duty of the young health care professionals to explore the *Ayurveda* classics and *Rasayana* therapy to create awareness about the strength of *Ayurveda* in geriatric care.



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