Review Article

PREMATURE AGEING (AKALAJA JARA): AYURVEDIC VIEW
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ABSTRACT

As the incidence of premature aging is increasing globally, it has become a burning issue to take major steps for its prevention. Conventional system of medicine has limited approach regarding its prevention. In Ayurveda, Geriatrics is considered as a separate branch among 8 branches of Ayurveda and it is also becoming a major medical speciality globally. In ancient Ayurvedic texts there is a detailed description of Rasayan therapy which is considered as one of the best therapy to prevent premature aging as well as other geriatric problems. As it is well said, “Prevention is better than cure”. Prevention and management of health problems could help the elderly to improve quality of life and remain self-dependent for their daily activities to maximum possible extent. Ayurveda also described Swasthvrut (personal hygiene) and Sadavrut which is also considered to be effective to slow down the aging process. There is a considerable scope to develop safe and cost-effective protocol for premature aging on the basis of Ayurvedic life-style management and Rasayana therapy.

Keywords: Akalaja Jara, premature aging, Rasayana, Swasthvrut, Sadavrut.

INTRODUCTION

The desire to live, one of the basic instincts has been common to all living creatures ever since the first unicellular organism evolved on this graceful plant, the Earth. Man, the most developed and sophisticated living being on earth, so considered due to his tremendous intellectual abilities is in no way at par with other animals. Although everyone is familiar with aging, defining aging is not straightforward. Ageing is defined as process of growing old, accumulating damage to cells, tissues and organs with the passage of time.

In Ayurveda ageing is defined as ‘Jara’. Jara word derived from root “Jrush” meaning “old”. Jara is considered as the inevitable and inescapable part of life. In fact, it is the conglomeration of the richness of one’s experience of living. Jara, the old age is of two types 1.Kalaj jara 2. Akalajajara.

DEFINITION OF AGEING

Although everyone is familiar with aging, defining aging is not so straightforward. Ageing is defined as process of growing old, accumulating damage to cells, tissues and organs with the passage of time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Charaka Samhita (1000 BC): This treatise has given Nidana, Samprapti, symptoms and treatment of the Jara which occurs prematurly in Rishi Parishad and the bad effects of Gramya Ahara, though Charaka has not clearly mentioned word ‘Akalaja’ for it.

Sushruta Samhita (800 –1000 BC): Sushruta has first time used the word ‘Akalaj Jara’ among naturally occurring diseases. He mentioned that diseases that occur prematurely are treatable.

Samgrahaka kala (7th ad): Both Ashtanga Hridaya and Ashtanga Samgrha has given description of Jara which is similar to that mentioned by Acharya Sushruta, they described that this disease occurs because of ‘Arakshana’ (lack in care).

SYMPTOMS

Physical signs & symptoms: Physical signs and symptoms are Vali (wrinkles), Paliya (premature greaying of hair), Khalitya

nispriyakriya” this dictum of Charak should be understood in the sense that Svabhavaj jara or Kalaj jara is unavoidable and irreversible process but Akalaja jara is a somewhat reversible process.

One of the most popular theories of ageing; was first proposed by Dr. Denham Harman in 1950. In 1972, Harman modified his original theory to what became known as The Mitochondrial Theory of Aging. In its current form, this Theory proposes that reactive oxygen species that are produced in the Mitochondria causes damage to certain micro molecules including Lipids, Proteins and most importantly Mitochondrial DNA. This damage then causes mutation which leads to increase of ROS production and greatly enhance the accumulation of free radical within cells. This mitochondrial theory has been more widely accepted and is believed to play a major role in contributing to aging process.

As the incidence of premature aging is increasing globally, it has become a burning issue to take major steps for its prevention. Conventional system of medicine has limited approach regarding its prevention. In Ayurveda, Geriatrics is considered as a separate branch among 8 branches of Ayurveda and it is also becoming a major medical speciality globally. In ancient Ayurvedic texts there is a detailed description of Rasayan therapy which is considered as one of the best therapy to prevent premature aging as well as other geriatric problems. As it is well said, “Prevention is better than cure”. Prevention and management of health problems could help the elderly to improve quality of life and remain self-dependent for their daily activities to maximum possible extent. Ayurveda also described Swasthvrut (personal hygiene) and Sadavrut which is also considered to be effective to slow down the aging process. There is a considerable scope to develop safe and cost-effective protocol for premature aging on the basis of Ayurvedic life-style management and Rasayana therapy.

Keywords: Akalaja Jara, premature aging, Rasayana, Swasthvrut, Sadavrut.
Management

The ancient Ayurvedic Acharyas have found the solution, thousands of years ago, after an extensive search to explore the means and methods for Hitayu, Sukhayu and Dirghayu in the concept of Rasayana. Swasthvrut and Sadavrut, which helped to attain longer and healthier life.

Rasayana

The Rasayan word is composed from two words “Ras” and “Ayan” which refers to nutritional essence and its transportation throughout the body for its efficient assimilation into the body. A plentiful rasa holds promise of an impeccable nutritional state and its transportation. Rasayan is a magical tool to slow down ageing process and prevent many lifestyle disorders. Acharya Charaka described Dincharya and Rutucharya in Charaka Shamhita. 

Sadavrut

Rutucharya is not merely a drug therapy but a specialized procedure practiced in the form of rejuvenative recipes, dietary regimen and special health promoting conduct and behavior i.e. Achara Rutucharya, which is also similarly beneficial as Rasayana therapy.  

CONCLUSION

In this modernized era, lifestyle and faulty dietary habits are the main cause for premature ageing which is burning problem of today’s age. To prevent this disease, we have to follow Swasthvrut (personal hygiene) and Sadavrut (medical ethics) of Ayurveda. Rasayan is a magical tool to slow down ageing process. So one should obey the three main commands given by Ayurvedacharya i.e. Rasayan, Sadavrut and Swasthvrut to prevent premature ageing.

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Swarthvrut

Acharya Charak and Acharya Vagbhata described various benefits of Rasayan therapy as – enjoying long healthy life, enhances intelligence, memory, strength, youth, lustre, sweetness of voice etc. Rasayan improves metabolic processes, which results in appropriate biotransformation and produces the best quality body tissues.  

Acharya sharrghdharaha clearly stated that Rasayana includes use of certain Dravyas as Rudanti, Guggulu, Haritaki etc. that prevent early aging and guard against many disorders also. 

Same statement is found in Bhashajyaratnavali. Overall, in Ayurveda texts, Rasayans have been mentioned as a set of rejuvenating measures which aim towards a youthful rich and disease free life.

Rasayan therapy is basically towards the daily wear and tear, a human body suffers in the course of routine life and also the unwanted ill effects of infirmities afflicted during the same.

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