

UNDERSTANDING OF AGEING THROUGH AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT:

Ageing process and its responsible causative factors are remained matter of curiosity since era. Ayurveda accepts ageing as a natural phenomenon and is categorized under the heading of naturally occurring diseases. *Swabhava* (nature) and *Kala* (time factor) are accepted as causative factor for the same. In first 50 yrs of 21st century, old age dependency ratio is expected to become double in more developed region and triple in less developed region. During census (India) 2001 it was interestingly found that majority of senile people were living in rural area and it was assumed that due to rural area life style people average life span is more than the people of urban area. While discussing about Rasayana; the domestic food & life style (*Gramyaahara*) has been considered as responsible factor for disease production in general. The consequences of domestic food intake are very much similar with probabilistic ageing. Collectively all these facts throw a light on new direction to think about ageing.

Key Words: *Gramyaahara*, domestic food and life style, Ageing.

INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda explains Ageing process starting from birth to death as *Vaya* (chronological ageing). It is classified in to three stages i.e. *Balya*, *Madhyama* and *Jaraavastha*. For that age limit is considered up to 30yr, 30 to 60 (up to 70 yrs. by Shushruta) respectively^[1]. Within the period of *madhyamaavastha* shushruta has adopted a *haani* period (initiation of decline), beginning from the age of 40 yrs, however old age or senility is only considered after 70 yrs^[2]. Here, the word *haani* implies some decrement of body functions or at least initiation for the same. The word *Jara* itself derived from root word *Jru* with suffix *anga*, literary means decline stage or old age. Collectively ageing is the accumulation of changes in a person over time. It is defined as a progressive generalized impairment of function resulting in the loss of adaptive responses to stress and a growing risk of age-associated diseases.

Currently India has 6.3% of population over age of 60 yrs and expected to reach up to 10 at the end of 2050. During census 2001 it was interestingly found that majority of senile people were living in rural area and it was assumed that due to rural area life style people average life span are more than the people of urban area^[3].

OBJECTIVES:

To re-evaluate, discuss and elaborate various Ayurvedic concepts and principles related to ageing

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This article is based on review of Ayurvedic texts. Materials related to ageing have been collected from

classical texts like Charaka Samhita, Shushruta Samhita, Rasa Ratna Samuchaya and its available commentaries. Of course, modern text and available websites have also been search to collect information regarding its counter part of the topic.

AGEING

Jara (ageing) is considered as natural phenomenon like hunger, thirst and sleep^[4]. While commenting over the *Swabhava Bala Pravritta Vyadhi* (naturally occurring diseases)

The word *Prakriti* has denoted to both, the nature of a particular species, and the nature of an individual within the specie. For example age of onset of ageing varies in the different species. Similarly within the specy also the nature of an individual varies according to *Desha* (habitat), *Kala* (time and environment, *Prakriti* (personality), and heredity and accordingly ageing may appear early, timely or late with less, moderate or more symptoms.

TYPES OF AGEING

On the path physiological basis ageing has been

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classified in to two; i.e. *Kalaja jara* (timely ageing) and *Akalaja jara*^[5](premature ageing). Here timely ageing is universal ageing. While *Akalaja jara* can be compared with probabilistic ageing^[6], that occurs prematurely or brings many diseases like EHT, diabetes mellitus type-2 as it is *Aparirakshanakrita*; means if proper care is not taken such ageing develops. Here proper care means to follow daily or seasonal regimen, dietary rules, code of conducts, and use of *Rasayana* etc.

CAUSATIVE FACTORS

As far as universal ageing (*Kalaj Jara*) is concerned *Swabhava* (as narrated during theory of no cause for cessation) and *Kala* (time factor) can be the ultimate cause for the same, as ageing is considered as naturally occurring disease and cessation of existence is always in the course of nature^[7]. As well as it is clearly stated that time causes changes daily in the world (same in human body too) that we may not appreciate this minute changes taking place^[8], but *Jara* and *Mrityu* (death) are result of time only^[9].

Life span of an individual is determined by two factors viz. *Daiva* (action of the previous life) and *Purushakrita* (action of the existing life) and as any of these can be subdued by another^[10]. Life span is invariably predetermined large to favorable and unfavorable conditions. It means role of favorable and unfavorable circumstances is also there. Here, absences of some of growth promotive factors like *Kalayoga* (opportunity), *Swabhava Samsiddhi* (favorable disposition of the nature), *Avighata* (absence of inhibiting factors), mental affliction etc. can also be supportive for propound the ageing.

Continuous over eating has been considered as root cause for all the disease, first people started over eating and as result of its consequences they got victim of various disease by impaired quality of *Dhatu*, provocation of *Vayu* and alteration of *Agni* status^[11].

Further while discussing *Rasayana* (rejuvenation), *Gramyaahara* (domestic food and life style) has been considered as common cause for all the disease^[12] and emphasized that a wise person should not follow *Gramyadharm* excessively^[13], as it is indeed the source of all evils^[14] even in past sages return to Himalaya remote from the evils of city life as finding themselves, in consequence, unequal to the observation of the code of obligations with their order entailed and realizing that the blame lay with their urban residence. *Gramyaahara* has been mentioned as causative factor for various inflammatory kind of disease like, *Shvayathu* (oedema), *Prameha* (Diabetes) etc.

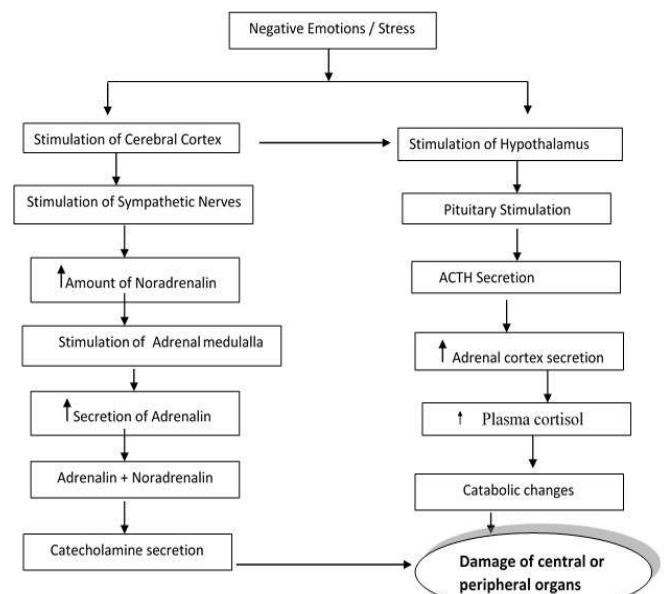
There is a bigger list of various factors is mentioned under the caption of *Gramyaahara*. Almost of the components are responsible for provocation of *Kapha*

and *Pitta*, reduce vitality of the body by their property being opposite to *Dhatu*s. Due to reduction in quality *Dhatu*, their capacity of sustain the body is reduces and can lead to decay prematurely. Further, the same causes have been mentioned in short that, to have physical work beyond own capacity, to have intake of cold substances, use of devoid vitality food, excessive sexual intercourse with aged lady, and unfavourable situation of mind are the causative factors for ageing^[15]. These provoke *Vayu* and lead to further degenerative changes to the body and in this way play important role for increase morbidity in *Dhatu* and bring early decay changes.

Along with faulty dietary habits, some psychological factors like fear, anger, grief, infatuation to over work etc. are also listed under the caption of *Gramyaahara*. While going through classics, various references regarding role of psyche for disease manifestation is also found; as, the mind (psyche) is the controller of the body^[16] as its connection with the soul, person with feeble mind are incapable of resisting disease^[17] as strength of body and mind both are responsible for innate type of strength to resist disease^[18]. To stay away from any kind of physical or psychological trauma has been considered as one of the growth promoting factor for thin person. Negative emotion like grief considered as disease promotive factor^[19].

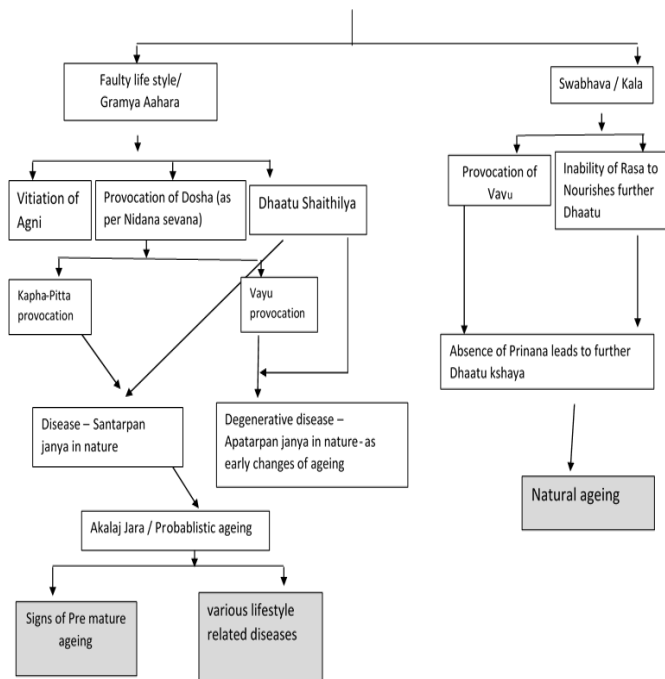
Actually, negative emotions like anxiety, grief, fear, anger, lead to failure of digestion of taken food and produces *Ama* it leads to alteration in *Agni* status^[20]. Frequent happening of the same lead to altered status of *Dhatvagni* i.e. metabolic activity too and in this context it may leads to ageing faster.

Role of negative emotions on organ damage is well understood. **(Flow chart: 1)**



Many theory of ageing including free radical theory accepts role of diet, lifestyle, stress, drug and other environmental factors on ageing directly or indirectly. Diet (especially, caloric restriction) has been shown to substantially affect lifespan in many animals, including delay or prevention of many age-related diseases. The effect of calorie restriction may be due to decreased formation of free radicals within the mitochondria causing a secondary induction of increased antioxidant defence capacity^[21].

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF AGEING: (Flow chart: 2)



Pathophysiology of ageing can be understood in two different manner:

- 1. Universal ageing:** here time and nature are inevitable factors. As there is no cause is needed for cessation. With the time passage; predominance of *Vayu* leads to decrement of *Dhatu*^[22] and vis a versa. In such condition *Rasa Dhatu* do not remain able to nourish the body in same manner as younger hood^[23]. This collectively led to ageing.
- 2. Probabilistic ageing:** while going through physiological effect of domestic lifestyle it can be understood that domestic lifestyle listed components acts on two way, i.e. provocation of *Kapha* and / or *Pitta* and simultaneously lead to decrease in quality of *Dhatu* further vitiates *Kleda* in the body. Collectively lead to altered status of *Agni* and develop diseases those are *Santarpanajanya* in nature. In adaptation of domestic lifestyle only a few like *Ruksha* (dry) diet, overstress are followed, this may lead to premature ageing without development of allied disease, and if faulty lifestyle in general is followed, these may lead to premature ageing along with possibility for development of allied disease in future.

CONCLUSION:

Ageing can be occur in two different way i.e. timely ageing (universal ageing) and untimely ageing (premature or probabilistic ageing). Naturally occurring disease is timely ageing and therefor *Swabhava* and *Kala* are prime and inevitable causative factors for the same but use of domestic lifestyle can be responsible for premature and probabilistic ageing by reducing vitality of the body.

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