A STUDY ON DRUGS DESCRIBED IN VAYAHSTHAPAN MAHAKASHAYA OF CHARAK SAMHITA AS AN AGE SUSTAINING ACTION

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ABSTRACT

Vayahsthan Mahakashaya is one of the important Mahakashaya of fifty great extractive of Charak samhita. The word Vayasthapan is commented by different Scholars of Ayurveda. On an analysis of the view of various scholars it can be said that preventing the aging process and maintain the youth is soul meaning of vayasthapan. This shows that aging was realized during that age also and drugs to sustain the age were studied. In Charak Samhita such age sustain drugs are enumerated in Vayasthapan Mahakashaya. Following are the drugs found in that mahakashaya-Amrita (Tinosporacordifolia (Willd) Miers ex Hook & Thems), Abhaya, (Terminalia chebula Retz), Dhatri, (Emblicaofficinalis Gaertn.), Mukta (Pluchea lanceolata C.B. Clarke.), Sveta (Clitoriaternatea Linn.), Jivanti (Leptadenia reticulata W&A), Atirasa (Asparagus racemosus Wild), Mandukparni (Centellaasiatica (Linn.) Urban.), Sthira (Desmodium gangeticum (Linn.) DC.) and Punernava (Boerhaaviadiffusa (Linn.)). The age sustaining drugs of Vayasthapan Mahakashaya of Charak Samhita were reviewed on scientific lines through published work revealed, that the drugs have various related activity.

Keywords: Vayasthapan, Mahakashaya, Amrita, Abhaya, Dhatri, Mukta, Sveta, Jivanti, Atirasa, sthira, Mandukparni, Punernava.

INTRODUCTION

The aging (jara) is a natural phenomenon. It is a svabhavabalapravrita vyadhi like Hunger (kshuta), Thirst (pipasa), Sleep (nidra) and Death (mrityu)¹². The old age has been referred with synonyms as Vridha, Vardhaka, Jara etc. This phenomenon generally progress slowly and starts at the age of about 60 years and the effects are quite visible at the age of 70 years³⁴. The progressive physiological changes in physical and mental health are: decline in tissues (dhatu), senses (indriya), strength (bala), virility (Virya), digestion and metabolism (agni), and enthusiasm (utsaha) associated with wrinkled skin (vali), grey hair (palitya) and baldness (khalita); attack of cough (kasa), dyspnoea (vasa), tremors (vpathu) and incapable to do any work and decline in mental functions like perception (grahana), retention (dharana), retrieval abilities (smarana), speech (vacana) and general knowledge (vijyana)³⁴ (S.S.Su. 35:35-36 and C.S.Vi 8:122).

The aging is of two types¹
1. Natural Aging (kalaja) which occurs at or after the proper age i.e. 60 years and evenafter following the daily and seasonal routines described in the bodily daily routine (svasthavittta) and use of purification (shodhana) in proper time (parirakshanə krita).

2. Premature Aging (akalaja) which occurs before 60 years of age and due to improper following of daily routine and purification.

TRIDOSH THEORY AND AGING
Age is broadly divided into three stages—childhood, middle age and old age. Childhood is determined up to sixteen years when the dhatus are immature, secondary sexual characters are not manifested, the body is delicate, unenduring, with incomplete strength and predominant inkaphadatu. This again with dhatus in developing stage and unstable mind remains up to thirty years. The middle age is characterized by strength, energy, virility, prowess, acquisition, retention, recollection, speech, and understanding, and qualities of all dhatus having reached the normal limit; with proper physical and mental strength, without degeneration in qualities of dhathus, with predominance of pittadhatus and is up to sixty years. Thereafter is the old age up to one hundred years. During this period dhatus, sense organs, strength, energy, virility, prowess, acquisition, retention, recollection, speech, and understanding gradually degenerate, qualities of dhatus go downand there is predominance of vayu. During this age, the measure of life-span is one hundred years. There are persons who live longer or shorter than that, in such case, one should determine the three division of age on basis of strength of factors like prakrëti etc (except vikrëti) and also characters of different period of life-span.

ROLE OF VATA IN AGING
The increase of vatadosha in old age causes depletion in reserves of Rasadhatus. This affects the synthesis of other dhatus and impaired nourishment of successive dhatus. Thus, ojas is affected and aging results.

MODERN CONCEPT OF AGING
The concept of aging also realized by modern scientist and narrated as aging is inevit-
able and every living organism has a finite life span. It has been emphasized that process of deterioration of function of various organs are seen after attainment of adulthood. In India Kanungo (1960) found that aging arises due to (i) Biological- deterioration of function of various organs (ii) Medicinal- due to various type of diseases specially after 60 yearsand (iii) Psychosocial.Biologically aging starts after the age of 21-22 years.

Somatic mutation theory is defined by Fallia (1958) in late fifties. According to him the cumulative effect of spontaneous mutation makes the cell less efficient, and this theory was supported by Curtis who observed an age associated increase in chromosomal aberrations.

According to Harmen D (1971) and Pacific RE and Davis K J A (1991) free radical such as super oxide, hydroxyl ion etc. are normally formed during biological reaction result in progressive damage to macromolecules, protein and DNA is the primary cause of aging. Genetic theory postulate that there is a marked difference in aging of between species, but there is not much different in the rate within a given species, this suggested that age related changes are programmed in genetic pool and merely unfold during development.

**VAYAHSTHAPAN**

The drug, which sustains the youth stage and prevents the aging process, is called as vayahsthapan. According to Susruta, Rasayana is vayahsthapan (maintaining youth), provide long life, intellect and strength and also eliminates the disease (P.V.Sharma). According to Chakrapani, the drug that stabilizes the effective youth of the body is known as vayahsthapana. According to Gangadhar, Vayahsthapandratrayastabilizes the youth; the supreme of the age by means of their prabhav. While interpreting the word vayahsthapan, D alhana says that it means maintaining life up to hundred years of age while “Aayuskar” may go even beyond this limit, quoting other view he adds that vahasthapan prevent old age and this maintains youth for a long, at another place he says that vahasthapan helps leading healthy life irrespective of its span.

**The vayahsthapanaction can be compared with the modern**

- Immunomodulator
- Immune-stimulating
- Immunopotentiating
- Anti-oxidant
- Adaptogens
- Cytoprotective
- Anti-stress
- Anabolic
- Anti-microbial
- Intellect promoting activity

**DRUGS OF VAYAHSTHAPAN MAHAKASHAYA-**

**Amrita (Guduchi)**

**Guna:** Guru, Snigdha, **Rasa:** Tikta, **Kashaaya,** **Vipaka:** Madhura, **Virya:** Ushna, **Doshika Action:** Tridosha Shamak, The qualities of guru and snigdha are nutritive innature, being similar in quality to rasadhatu it enhances and strengthens rasadhatu establishing solid grounding for the six remaining dhatu. Being tikta rasa it pacifies pittadosha, while kashaaya as a secondary taste it also balances kapha. Vata is balanced.
by the Guru and snigdha qualities that counter the dry and laghu qualities of vata. Its ushnavirya not only stimulates but also correct digestive fire, and digest aamadosha. The presence of the two gunas, guru and snigdha and the post-digestive actionas madhuravipaka indicate that the action of the drug is more anabolic than catabolic in nature and from an energetic perspective it counteracts the catabolic nature of aging. In experimental studies it was shown to have Immunomodulator, Anti-oxidant and Immuno-stimulating Activity.

**Abhaya (Haritaki)**


*Ushna, Doshika Action*: Tridosha Shmaka, Having all the tastes except salty, it pacify to all the dashas, even though it is predominantly kashaya taste. Although it has the qualities of laghu and ruksha, it is recorded as being more vata pacifying and used extensively in disorders of vata. This may be due to the ushna virya and madhuravipaka, both of which counteract vata. It is known for its rejuvenative action and hence it is recommended for long term intake being combined with various agents during the different seasonal changes to promote and fortify its rejuvenative properties. In experimental study it was shown to have Cytoprotective, Anti-mutotogenic and Anti-oxidant activity. It also prevents DNA break.

**Dhatri (Aamalki)**

*Guna*: Laghu, Ruksha, *Shita Rasa*: PanchaRasa; Amla (predominant), Madhura, Katu, Tikta, Kashaya, *Vipaka*: Madhura, *Virya*: Shita, *Doshika Action*: Tri dosha Shamaka, Aamalaki pacify pittadosha through shitavirya, and due to its madhuravipaka. It also balances to vataand kapha; vata is balanced by Amlarasa and the kapha is balanced by the rukshaguna and kashayarasa. Aamalaki is said as Shresthayashthapandrug and an important ingredient of Chyavanaprasha – the famous restorative and immune building preparation and is one of the three agents of Triphala. In experimental study it was shown to have Immunomodulator, Antimicrobial, Antioxidant, Adaptogen, freeredical scavenger, Cytoprotective activity.

**Mukta**

*Guna*: Guru, *Rasa*: Tikta, *Vipaka*: Katu, *Virya*: Ushna, *Doshika Action*: Kapha Vata Shamaka, Mukta has been commented as Rasnaby Chakrapani and Yogindranatha sen. Rasna is said as Shrèsthavatahara drug because of its ushnahavirya and guruguna. It also pacify kaphadosha by its Tiktarasa, katu vipak and ushnahavirya properties. It attenuates cadmium chloride induced oxidative stress and genotoxicity by altering anti-oxidants enzymes and reducing chromatid breaks and micronucli formation.

**Sveta**

*Guna*: Laghu, Ruksha, *Rasa*: Tikta, *Vipaka*: Katu, *Virya*: Shita, *Doshika Action*: Pacify, *Prabhava*: Medhya. Chakrapani has commented Svetas aparajita. Its anti-aging property is seen because of its vishaghna and TridoshaShamak-properties. Being Tridosha Shamaka it maintains healthy state of the body and due to their vishaghna action it removes the poisonous substances from the body which is responsible for the process of aging. Apart from that it also has medhya properties.
which counteract stress induced aging. In experimental study it is observed that its root extract enhance learning and memory in rats during growth spurt period 24, and have nootropic, anxiolytic, antidepressant, anti-convulsant and anti-stress activity 25.

Jivanti

Guna: Laghu, Snigdha, Rasa: Madhura, Vipak: Madhura, Virya: Shita, Doshikaaction: Tridosh Shatavari

Having the main feature snigdhaguna, madhurarasa, shitaviryaaand madhuravipaka, this drug build and strength the body and support kaphadosha in maintaining stability of the tissues. Its predominant snigdhaguna counters the catabolic effect of vataaand metabolic effect of pitta, which when increased can cause increased metabolism leading to catabolism. The madhuravipaka support formation of Rasadhatuand ojas, maintaining health and immunity, providing strength and energy and nourishes the remaining dhatus. In experimental study it was shown to have Galactogogue properties 26 and Estrogenomimetic action 27.

Atirasa (Shatavari)

Guna: Guru, Snigdha, Rasa: Madhura, Tikta, Vipak: Madhura, Virya: Shita, Doshikaaction: Vata Pitta pacifying. Shatavari pacifies both vataaand pitta. Its madhura, TiktaRaasaand shita Virya, pacify pitta and vataa pacify by madhurarasa, guruvand snigdha qualities and madhuravipaka. It has nourishing effect onrasadhatus observed in its galactagogue actionas breast milk, which is anuppadhatu of Rasa hence exhibits the quality of Rasa in its production. In experimental study it was shown to have Adaptogens 28 and Immunomodulator 29 activity.

Mandukaparni

Guna: Laghu, Rasa: Tikta, Kashaya, Vipak: Madhura, Virya: Shita, Doshikaaction: Kapha Pitta Shamak, Mandukaparni pacify pitta through Tiktaand kashayarasa, madhuravipakaand by its shita Virya. It also pacifies kaphadosha by tiktaand kashyaraand laghuguna. It is one of the four medhya Rasayana mentioned in Charak Samhitaand used to increases strength, intellect, digestive fire and fair complexion 30. It is highly regarded for its action on the central and peripheral nervous system as well as on the mind itself. Mandukaparni promotes circulation to the peripheral tissues as well as the brain. Its actionas avayasthapan relates directly to the actions on the mind as it promotes memory recall, concentration and reduces stress. Its action on circulation and blood vessel health 31 can also be associated with anti-aging properties as disease in old age can be cause due to the degeneration of blood vessels as inarteriosclerosis and varicose veins, and in conditions arising from poor peripheral circulation. It was found to increase brain GABA Level 32 and showed significant improvement in cooperation, memory, concentration, attention, vocabulary and social adjustment in mentally - challenged children. In experimental study it was shown to have Anti-anxiety 33, Anti-microbial 34, Intellect promoting 35 and Anti-oxidant 36 activity.

Shithira (Shalparni)

Guna: Guru, Snigdha, Rasa: Madhura, Tikta, Vipak: Madhura, Virya: Ushna, Doshikaaction: Tridosh Shamak. The properties like guruvand snigdha, the madhurarasa, the ushnaviryaaand madhuravipakaall indicate that the drug is pacifies to Vatadoshaand Pitta, is
pacified by the madhura, tiktara and kapha, by the tiktarasa and ushna virya. In experimental study plant shows cardio protective and Anti-oxidants activities.

**Punarnava**

*Guna:* Laghu, Ruksha, *Rasa:* Madhura, Tikta, Kashaya, *Vipak:* Madhura, *Virya:* Ushna, *Dosha action:* Tridosha Shamak. Punarnava, vata pacifying action is due to madhurasand ushnavirya and by the madhuravipaka. Its laghu guna with ushna virya pacifies the guru, snigdha, guna of aama dosha. It is well known diuretic and is used in the treatment of oedema. It has been shown to have Anti-stress and Anti-oxidant activity.

**DISCUSSION**

On analysis of the view of various scholars’, it can be said that preventing the aging process and maintain the youth is soul meaning of vayahsthapan. In Ayurvedic classic aging is said as natural phenomenon. According to Susruta aging is of two types-Natural and premature aging, natural aging (kalaj) which occurs at or after the proper age i.e. 60 years, premature Aging (akalaj) which occurs before 60 years of age and due to improper following of daily routine and purification. The increase of vatadosha in old age causes depletion in reserves of rasadhatu, this affects the synthesis of other dhatus and impaired nourishment of successive dhatus, thusojas is affected and aging results. The age sustaining drugs of Charaka Samhita were reviewed on scientific lines through published work revealed that some of the drug i.e., *Tinosporacordifolia* (Willd) Miers ex Hook & Them (Amrita)\(^{10}\), *Terminalia chebula* Retz (Abhay)\(^{14}\), *EmblicaOfficinalis* Gaertn (Dhatri)\(^{41}\), *Asparagus racemosus* Willd (Atrara)\(^{37}\), Centella asiatica (Linn) Urban, (Mandukaparni)\(^{36}\), *Desmodium gangeticum* (Linn.) DC. (Sthira)\(^{38}\), *Boerhaavia diffusa* Linn (Punarnava)\(^{40}\) have anti-oxidant activity, *Embllicaofficinalis* Gaertn (Dhatri)\(^{20}\) and *Asparagus racemosus* Willd (Atrara)\(^{21}\) have adaptogens activity and *Aparajita* have anti-anxiety as well as intellect promoting activity\(^{33,25,35,24}\). *Jivanti* have estrogenomimetic activity\(^{27}\). It is also reported that some of the drug like Abhaya prevent DNA breaking\(^{15}\) and Rasnaprevent chromatid breaks induced by cadmium chloride\(^{23}\).

**CONCLUSION**

Vayahsthapanamahakashaya is one of the important mahakashaya of Caraka samhita. The ten drugs are described in this mahakashaya, the sole purpose of these drugs is preventing the aging process and maintaining the youthful age and these drugs have been reported for various related activities.

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