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# Sattvavajaya Chikitsa (psychotherapy) as a preventive aspect in Akalaja Jara (premature ageing)

Dr. Priyanka Rawal,<sup>1</sup> Vd. Hitesh Vyas,<sup>2</sup> Dr. A. S. Baghel,<sup>3</sup> Dr. Shubhangi Kamble<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Scholar, <sup>2</sup>Professor, <sup>3</sup>Professor & HOD, <sup>4</sup>Associate Professor, Dept. of Basic Principles, Institute for Postgraduate Teaching & Research in Ayurveda, Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar, Gujarat, INDIA.

## ABSTRACT

The present condition of human health around the globe is far from satisfaction. Man is suffering from the diseases which are caused due to stress either mental or physical and premature ageing (*Akalaja Jara*) is one of them. There are many theory related to ageing among all of them Free Radical Theory is most acceptable, which answers most of the questions related with Psychological as well as Physical changes during ageing. Stress can be considered as a major factor for *Akalaja Jara*. *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* is a specialized type of treatment influencing the psychological aspect of body. It can be applied in the form of Yogic practices and other mind control techniques. As mind and body are interrelated to each other, these techniques also affect physical health. It is the unique concept of Ayurveda which may be effective in improving quality of life. That is why to deal with stress and to prevent *Akalaja Jara*, *Sattvavajaya* (control of mind from unwholesome objects) could be a better approach.

**Key words:** *Akalaja Jara, Stress, Sattvavajaya Chikitsa, Relaxation Technique.*

## INTRODUCTION

We live in a world overrun by stress. Global urbanization, competition and the spread of technology have created a world in which access to information has become an obligation and necessity. Health is not merely an absence or alleviation of diseases rather it is the state of *Dhatuamyata*. So, the health of a person is to be assessed at these three levels to value the same: Physical, Psychological and

Spiritual.

In today's era of modernization psychological factor play a major role in the manifestation of diseases. Premature ageing or *Akalaja Jara* is also a manifestation of stress. According to *Ayurvediya Mahakosha* the substance which continuously trims down is known as *Jara*. It is also known as *Vaardhakyam* means the latter phase of life span.<sup>[1]</sup>

Age classification according to *Acharya Charaka*, *Jara* starts after 60<sup>th</sup> year of age. There is diminution of the *Dhatu* (tissue elements), strength of sense organs, energy, power of understanding, retention, memorizing, speech and analyzing facts. There is gradual diminution in the qualities of *Dhatu* and dominance of *Vata* during this age.<sup>[2]</sup> Various *Manasika Nidanas* like *Chinta*, *Shoka*, *Krodha* etc. directly affect *Agni* results in *Mandagni*.<sup>[3]</sup> Here again *Dhatu* get malnourished due to *Mandagni* and *Jara* is a manifestation of *Dhatu Kshaya*.

### Address for correspondence:

Dr. Priyanka Rawal

Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of Basic Principles, Institute for Postgraduate Teaching & Research in Ayurveda, Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar, Gujarat, INDIA.

E-mail: priyankadraw@gmail.com

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## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To explore the role of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* (Psychotherapy) in premature ageing (*Akalaja Jara*) and its scientific relevance.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical text of Ayurveda and allied sciences, research papers and related data on different websites have been critically reviewed. All the compiled materials have been analyzed to frame the present research paper.

### Types of Jara (Ageing)

*Sushruta* has described that *Jara* is natural phenomenon of human body. It is divided in two types i.e. *Kalaja Jara* and *Akalaja Jara*.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### *Kalaja Jara*

The manifestations of age related symptoms are reflected after certain age. The *Kalaja Jara* is *Pariraksana Krita*, which means that it occurs at the proper age even after following the daily and seasonal routine described in *Swasthavritta* and use of *Shodhana* at the proper time. However, this type of ageing may be of less intensity and slow progressing and thus may not be very troublesome.

#### *Akalaja Jara*

The symptoms which manifests before certain age due to various etiological factors, the ageing process is rapid. This type of *Jara* is said to be due to *Apari Rakshana Krita*, which means that it occurs before the mentioned age due to not taking the proper care of personal hygiene (*Swasthavritta*) and not undergoing *Shodhana* at proper time. This type of *Jara* may be of greater intensity and rapidly progressing, if no care is taken to check it through proper treatment.

### Causative factors of *Akalaja Jara*<sup>[5]</sup>

There is no direct reference of causative factors of *Jara* in *Brihatrayi*. But in *Rasayana* chapter it has been mentioned. Only *Rasa Vagbhata* has mentioned some factors as a causative of *Jara*.

- *Panthah* : excessive walking or travelling
- *Sheetam* : excessive cold food or spoiled food
- *Kadannam* : food article devoid of *Jivaniya* properties,
- *Vayovridha Yoshitah* : aged women
- *Manasa Pratikulta* : unfavorable condition of mind.

In today's civilized world and stressful environment *Manasa Pratikulta* is the most important factor for *Akalaja Jara*.

### Symptoms of Premature Ageing

*Vali* (wrinkles), *Palitya* (premature graying of hair), *Khalitya* (hair loss), *Sukra Apravartanam*, *Oja Kshaya*, *Asamartha Cheshta* (inability to work), *Alpmeda* (debilitated), *Smriti Hani* (loss of memory), *Utsahahani* (decreased enthusiasm), *Medhahani* (decreased function of intellect) etc.

### Stress and premature Ageing

There are many theory related to process of ageing and free radicle theory is one of them which is most acceptable.<sup>[6]</sup> It postulates that ageing results from an accumulation of changes caused by reactions in the body initiated by highly reactive molecules known as 'free radicals'. The changes induced by free radicals are believed to be a major cause of ageing, disease development or death. Mental stress is directly linked to over production of free radicals. Intense emotions such as anger, anxiety, tension or stress creates cortisone and catecholamine chemicals that reacts with different organs and cells, ultimately creating free radicals in the long run, these become harbinger of diseases even when there is a slight deficiency in the body.<sup>[7]</sup> In Ayurveda too *Ama* is also some what similar to free radical. Psychic factors like *Chinta*, *Shoka*, *Bhaya*, *Krodha* etc. leads to indigestion of food which further causes *Ama* formation. *Ama* is the root cause for all the diseases. A study done by department of psychiatry in the university of California concluded that Women with the highest levels of perceived stress have telomeres shorter on

average by the equivalent of at least one decade of additional aging compared to low stress women.<sup>[8]</sup>

#### Effect of stress on different body organ<sup>[9]</sup>

- **Skin** - Skin problems like acne, eczema, dermatitis, random breakouts and skin rashes.
- **Brain** - issues with mood, anger, depression, irritability, lack of energy, concentration problems and panic attacks.
- **Heart** - Increased blood pressure, fast heartbeat, increased risk of heart attack and stroke, higher cholesterol.
- **Stomach** - peptic ulcers, cramps, reflux, nausea, weight fluctuations
- **Pancreas** - elevated secretion of insulin, diabetes, obesity, damaged arteries
- **Immune system** - suppressed effectiveness of the immune system to battle and recover from illness
- **Reproductive system** - decreased testosterone and estradiol production, reduced fertility, dampening of sexual behavior.
- **Joints and Muscles** - aches and pains, inflammation, tension, low bone density.

#### SATTVAJAYA CHIKITSA

Stressful environment and disturbed *Manasbhava* adversely affect the health which may leads to ageing before time i.e. *Akalaja Jara*.<sup>[10]</sup> To cope up with this stress *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* is the unique concept of Ayurveda. *Acharya Charaka* used the word to name the treatment of the diseases where 'Sattva' balance is interfered. Hence, he has defined it as a method of controlling or restraining the mind from unwholesome *Arthas*.<sup>[11]</sup> It can be achieved by increasing *Sattva* to subdue the exaggerated *Rajasa* and *Tamasa*. *Gyana, Vigyan, Dhairya, Smriti, Smadhi* are the tools given in classics to attain the ultimate aim of *Sattvavajaya* i.e. *Manonigraha*.

1. **Gyana** - It means *Adhyatma Gyana* i.e. spiritual knowledge or knowledge about absolute. *Adhyatma Gyana* could also mean the complete

knowledge of *Sharira* and *Manasa* and all those things which are beneficial and harmful for it.

2. **Vigyana** - Knowledge of the scriptures and texts which takes the person towards true knowledge is *Vigyanam*.
3. **Dhairya** - Calming down the vitiated and hyperactive state of *Manasa* i.e. increasing the patience of the person by counseling or other methods. Its gives the courage to the person to bear the pain and other challenges in life.
4. **Smriti** - Trying to memorize the past incidences, as *Charaka Acharya* states that only if one remembers the real nature of things he gets rid of miseries. The hidden conflicts which are the primary source of an emotional illness are exposed by recalling of things.
5. **Samadhi** - With drawing the mind from worldly objects and meditating on the spiritual dimension of personality. A condition where after gaining complete contact with the *Atma, Manasa* losses its contact with the external objects and conjunctions only with the *Atma* is the *Samadhi Awastha*. Here there is complete cessation of all types of *Vikara* or *Dukha*. It is achieved only after following the *Astanga Yoga* techniques and certain other specific techniques like the *Japa* of *Pranava* etc.<sup>[12]</sup>

These five aspects of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* contain in itself all other therapies advised for *Manasa*.

#### DISCUSSION

*Charaka Samhita* particularly has emphasized the significance of the relationship between body and mind in both its physiological and pathological status. When the *Sharirika* and *Manasika Doshas* are in the state of equipoise, the health of the body and mind are good but when they become disturbed, diseases may occur. *Sharira* follows *Manasa* and *Manasa* follows *Sharira*.<sup>[13]</sup> When *Sharirika* and *Manasika Vikaras* are allowed to persist for long times get combined with each other. That's why most of the disease needs psychological treatment with rational therapy. Due to stress there is increase in *Rajo Guna*

of *Manasa*. *Raja* and *Vata* are interrelated to each other, so ultimately increases in *Vata Guna* too.<sup>[14]</sup> This *Vata* is responsible for further manifestation of symptoms like *Vali*, *Khalitya*, *Shosh* and ultimately *Dhatu Kshaya*. To prevent this stress in early stage *Sattvavajaya* could be a better approach either in the form of *Sadvritta* or relaxation techniques. Relaxation techniques like *Pranayam*, *Asana* and meditation plays an important role in the prevention of premature ageing. Collective impact of *Nadi Shodhana*, *Bhramari Pranayama* and *Aum* chanting modulate the sympathetic and parasympathetic activity there by resulting in relaxation. From the *Yogic* point of view *Nadi Shodana Pranayama* regulates *Prana* flow in the body. It helps to remove congestion or blockage of *Nadis* and thereby allows the free flow of *Prana*. When the *Pingala Nadi* is dominant, right nostril breathing will be there resulting in heating up of the body and increased physical activity. While *Ida Nadi* dominancy results in left nostril breathing, increased mental activity. These two aspects of *Prana* represent the two most obvious characteristics of human, the ability to think and act.<sup>[15]</sup> *Pranayama* results in the control on *Chanchalatva Guna* of *Vata* and also *Rajas Guna*. *Vata Dosha* is the controller of *Manasa*, by controlling the breath, *Manasa* also gets controlled. The various *Manasa Bhavas* like *Krodha*, *Bhaya* etc also comes under control through the *Pranayama*. Which is the root cause for all type of stress. All these relaxation techniques lessen the Stress level in the body and activate *Mana* for proper function by controlling *Raja Dosha* and breaks the *Avarana* of *Tamas*. *Raja* and *Vata* both are interrelated by the *Samyavashtha* of *Raja Guna*, *Vata* also get controlled. Ultimately all the *Avarana* breaks down. There is free flow of *Prana* in *Manovaha Srotas (Hridaya)*. *Manasa* get activated for *Sawashyanighra* and *Indriyaabhighra Karma*.

## CONCLUSION

In present era everyone is suffering from stress either it's professional or personal. As the mind and body are interrelated to each other that's why mental stress appears as physical changes like early greying of hair, alopecia, hypertension, wrinkles, early

menopause and arthritic changes in joints etc. To avoid this stress, *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* is the better way from our classics either in the form of relaxation techniques or *Sadvritta Palana* which gives mental stability to the individual.

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