

Vayasthapana Gana: An Elixir of Life

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Abstract

Since the dawn of human civilization man has longed for a long and healthy life. To achieve this, various alterations to food and experiments have been conducted from time to time. One important method to promote longevity is the use of *Vayasthapana Gana* drugs. These medicinal plants have been used, tested time and again and have always yielded desired results. Ageing is due to the catabolic effect of *Vata dosha* on the *dhatu* governed by our individual *Prakruti*, *Khavagunya*-weakness, lifestyle and the stage of life. The drugs which improve the well-being, upgrade the health status, promote longevity, improve the intellect and delay the ageing process are referred by the name *Vayasthapana*. The drugs of this *Gana* are free radical scavenging agents. These herbs have rejuvenating and restorative properties. Various experiments have been conducted which prove the immunomodulatory effect of *Tinospora cordifolia* on macrophage activation. The antioxidant activity and immunomodulatory activities of *Guduchi* are well known and thus the drug is looked down with respect in the field of longevity. *Rasayana* is the measure by which one gets *rasa, raktadi dhatus* in its best condition, which establishes the age (*Vayasthapana*). Through various experiments immunomodulatory, anti-stress, adaptogen activities of these herbs has been confirmed.

Keywords: *Vayasthapana*, longevity, free radical scavenging, rejuvenating.

Introduction

Since the dawn of human civilization man has longed for long and healthy life. Living long without a healthy life is of no use. Researchers have been trying to find the solution to the maze of longevity for a long time and Ayurveda is where they seem to have found some respite. Ayurveda the science of life has two objectives, keeping the health of the healthy and to treat the diseased. Both these objectives are an essential component of longevity and if even a single component is missed out the cycle of life will stop rolling or at least effectively. For the purpose of improving health various herbs have been described in classical texts of Ayurveda. One of the indications for this is found in *Charak Samhita Sutrasthan* Chapter-4 where *Vayasthapana gana* drugs are listed. The ten drugs listed have anti-ageing properties, are rejuvenating, aphrodisiac, improve the wellbeing, upgrade the health status, improves the intellect [1]. Dalhana has explained the word '*Vayasthapana*' by giving its two meanings.

1. It enables a person to live a full life span of 100 years.
2. It makes the man to live young for a long period thus prevents the *Jara*.

According to *Charak Samhita* the drugs which prevent ageing process is known as '*Vayasthapana*'.

Materials and Methods

Information regarding ageing, longevity, *Vayasthapana gana* was obtained from *Charak Samhita*, various books of *Dravyaguna Vigyan*. Information regarding the above said subjects was also searched on internet and useful information gathered.

Vayasthapana Mahakashya

अमृताऽभयाधत्रीमुक्ताश्वेताजीवन्त्यतिरसामण्डूकपर्णीस्थिरापुनर्नवा इति
दशैमानि वयःस्थापनानि भवन्ति।।

(च.सू. 4/18६)

Amruta (Guduchi)

Tinospora Cordifolia

- Rasa-Tikta, Kashaya
- Guna-Guru, Snigdha
- Virya-Ushna
- Vipaka-Madhura
- Karma-Tridosha Guna, Rasyana, Dipana, Pachan, Amahara, Pramehaghna, Vayasthapana.

Amruta is *Vatashamaka* because of the *Ushna virya*. *Pittahara* due to *Madhur Vipaka* and *Tikta, Kashaya Rasa* while *Kaphashamak* because of *Ushna Virya* and *Tikta, Kashaya Rasa* [2].

The *guru* and *snigdha guna* are nutritive in action. The *Vipaka* (Post digestive) action proves that *Guduchi* is anabolic in nature.

Various experiments have been conducted which prove the immunomodulatory effect of *Tinospora cordifolia* on macrophage activation [3]. The antioxidant activity and immunomodulatory [4] activities of *Guduchi* are well known and thus the drug is looked down with respect in the field of longevity.

Abhaya (Haritaki)

Terminalia Chebula

- Rasa-Kashaya Pradhan Pancharas
- Guna-Laghu, Ruksha

- Virya-Ushna
- Vipaka-Madhura
- Karma-Tridoshahara, Rasayana, Anulomana, Arshoghana

Terminalia chebula is an *Anulomana dravya* and *Vata-pacifying* due to its *Ushna virya* and *Madhur Vipaka*. The name *Abhaya* itself means that it rejuvenates the body and wards off the fear of diseases. There is a unique concept of *Ritu Haritaki* in which Haritaki is consumed with different Anupana (Vehicle) in different *Ritu* (seasons) to attain Rasayana properties.

Haritaki possesses antioxidant and free radical scavenging activity, cytoprotective activity, anticarcinogenic activity, radioprotective, chemopreventive activity, purgative property, gastro-intestinal motility improving and antispasmodic activity, hepatoprotective activity [5]. It is also called *Pathya* because it removes any obstructive material and clears the path (*Srotas*).

Dhatri (Amalaki)

Emblca Officinalis

- Rasa-Amlapradhan lavanvarjita Pancharas
- Guna-Laghu, Ruksha, Sara
- Virya-Shita
- Vipaka-Madhur
- Karma-Tridoshahara, Rasayana, Pramehaghna, Prajasthapana

Amlaki is Vata pacifying due to the *amla rasa*, *Pittahara* due to the *Shita virya* and *Madhur vipaka*, *Kaphahara* because of *Ruksha Guna* and *Kashaya rasa* [6]. *Amlaki* or Indian gooseberry is known for its medicinal and therapeutic properties from the ancient time in India and considered as a wonder fruit for health conscious population [7]. It is considered as the *Amritphal* (Life giving fruit).

Amlaki is one of the best drugs used for anti-ageing. It is best tissue rejuvenating herb [8]. The *Amlaki* is rich in Vitamin C, Tannic acid and gallic acid. *Amlaki* is one of the greatest antioxidant herb in Ayurveda as it has low molecular weight hydrolysable tannins (Emblcin A&B).

Ukta (Rasna)

Pluchea Lanceolata

- Rasa-Tikta
- Guna-Guru
- Virya-Ushna
- Vipaka-Katu
- Doshkarma-Vata kapha shamak

Rasna is *Vata* pacifying due to *Ushna virya* and *Kaphahara* due to *tikta rasa*, *katu vipaka* and *ushna virya*. Rasna is considered best *Vatahara dravya* 'Rasna Vatharanam'. *Vata* is dissociative in nature, thus is also an important factor in ageing. *Pluchea lanceolata* extract has been found to reduce Cadmium Chloride induced oxidative stress and genotoxicity in Swiss albino mice [9]. Rasna is used traditionally as analgesic, antipyretic and in various other ailments.

Shweta (Aparajita)

Clitoria Ternatea

- Rasa-Tikta, Kashaya
- Guna-Laghu, Ruksha
- Virya-Shita
- Vipaka-Katu

- Doshkarma-Pitta kapha shamak

Pittahara due to *Shita virya* and is *Kapha shamak* due to *tikta*, *kashaya rasa* and *katu vipaka*.

The plant is found to have many pharmacological effects including antioxidant, hypolipidemic, anticancer, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antipyretic, antidiabetic, antimicrobial, gastrointestinal antiparasitic, insecticidal [10].

Jeevanti

Leptadenia Reticulata

- Rasa-Madhur
- Guna-Laghu, Snigdha
- Virya-Shita
- Vipaka-Madhur
- Doshkarma-Tridoshshamaka

Pharmacological actions-Hepatoprotective, diuretic, antiasthmatic, immunomodulatory activity. It also possesses appetizer, aphrodisiac, anticancerous and antimicrobial properties [11]. Principal constituents found in *Leptadenia* are Leptidin, β -sterol, leptaden.

Atirasa (Shatavari)

Asparagus Racemosus

- Rasa-Madhur, tikta
- Guna-Guru, Snigdha
- Virya-Shita
- Vipaka-Madhur
- Doshkarma-Vata pitta shamaka
- Karma-Rasayana, Medhya, Pushti vardhak, Shukravardhak, Stanyavardhak, Balya, Sothara, Vrisya.

Pharmacological actions-Galactagogue, tonic, diuretic [12].

It has been found to have anti-oxidant properties, hepatoprotective activity [13] and anticancer activity [14].

Mandukparni

Centella Asiatica

- Rasa-Tikta, Kashaya, Madhur
- Guna-Laghu, Sara
- Virya-Shita
- Vipaka-Madhur
- Prabhava-Medhya
- Doshkarma-Tridoshshamaka
- Karma-Medhya, Rasayana, Swarya, Smriti vardhak, Kusthaghna, Pandujit, Hridya

The herb is well known for its memory enhancing activity however it possesses other activities too like anti-inflammatory, sedative, hypotensive and hepato protective. The accumulation of amyloid 3(AR) is a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease and is known to result in neurotoxicity both *in vivo* and *in vitro*. Study demonstrated that treatment with the water extract of *Centella asiatica* (CAW) improves learning and memory deficits in Tg2576 mice, an animal model of AR accumulation [15].

Sthira (Shalparni)

Desmodium Gangeticum

- Rasa-Madhur, Tikta
- Guna-Guru, Snigdha
- Virya-Shita
- Vipaka-Madhura

- Doshkarma-Vata pitta shamak
- Karma-Shwashara, Jwaraghana, Rasayana, Vishaghna, Vrisya

Anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory properties are found in Shalparni. The plant contains flavonoid and iso flavonoid glycosides which are known antioxidants ^[16]. So the plant possesses free radical scavenging activity.

Punarnava

Boerhavia Diffusa

- Rasa-Tikta Guna-Laghu, Ruksha
- Virya-Shita
- Vipaka-Katu
- Doshkarma-Pitta kapha shamaka

Pharmacological actions-Diuretic, laxative, antihelmintic properties are found in *Punarnava*.

Discussion

Ageing is a continuous, progressive and inevitable phase of human life and it cannot be prevented but it can be delayed where in the concept of healthy ageing comes handy. The various Rasayana dravyas and *Vayasthapana gana* drugs can perform this task efficiently. The *Vayasthapana* drugs have anti-oxidant, immunomodulatory, adaptogenic properties which forms the basis of healthy ageing and longevity. Various other disease preventing and disease eliminating unique characteristics are present in the drugs of *Vayasthapana gana*. Coupled with healthy lifestyle, practices of Yoga, time to time Panchkarma these drugs can yield miraculous results surpassing any other form of anti-ageing therapy.

Conclusion

Rasayana therapy and *Vayasthapana* have been dealt in length in the classical texts of Ayurveda. *Rasayana* is the measure by which one gets *rasa, raktadi dhatus* in its best condition, which establishes the age (*Vayasthapana*) ^[17]. Through various experiments immunomodulatory, anti-stress, adaptogen activities of these herbs has been confirmed. Herbs like Mandukparni are effective in disease of old age like Alzheimer's disease and thus can improve the quality of life. It is more important to add life to the years, not just adding years to the life.

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