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“Role Of *Deha Prakriti* In The Process Of Ageing: A Classical Ayurvedic Review”

1. Dr. Snehal S.Kalmegh, Associate Professor, Department of Samhita Siddhant, Mahatma Phule Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Babulgaon
2. Dr. Tejashree V. Khanaorkar, Associate Professor, Department of Samhita Siddhant, Shri K.R Pandav Ayurved College and Hospital, Bahadura Nagpur
3. Dr. Sneha Wakde, Assistant Professor, Department of Samhita Siddhant, Shri K.R Pandav Ayurved College and Hospital, Bahadura Nagpur

Abstract

Ayurveda, an eternal science grounded in fundamental and immutable principles, considers Prakriti as one of its core concepts. Prakriti represents the innate constitutional makeup of an individual, determined at the time of conception by the predominance of Tridosha, and remains unaltered throughout life. It governs physical structure, physiological functions, psychological attributes, disease susceptibility, and individual responses to internal and external stimuli. Ageing (*Jara* or *Vridhnavastha*) is described in Ayurveda as a natural and inevitable process characterized by gradual degeneration of tissues, decline in functional capacity, and dominance of Vata Dosha. Although ageing is a physiological phenomenon, classical texts emphasize the contributory role of Doshas—particularly Pitta, owing to its *Ushna*, *Tikshna*, *Sara*, and *Amla* properties—in accelerating degenerative changes. Individuals with Pitta-predominant Prakriti are described as being more susceptible to early manifestations of ageing such as greying of hair, wrinkling of skin, and reduced tissue endurance. This review attempts to critically re-evaluate the interrelationship between Prakriti and the process of ageing, integrating classical Ayurvedic descriptions with contemporary concepts of senescence. Understanding constitutional predisposition offers a valuable framework for individualized preventive strategies and lifestyle modifications aimed at achieving healthy ageing.

Keywords: Ageing, *Jara*, *Prakriti*, *Tridosha*, *Pitta*, Senescence

1. Introduction

The term *Prakriti* is derived from two Sanskrit roots—*Pra* (first) and *Kri* (creation)—denoting the primordial constitutional framework of an individual. In Ayurveda, *Prakriti* signifies the natural and inherent state of the body and mind, established at the moment of conception through the relative dominance of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha Doshas. Although all three Doshas coexist in every individual, their proportional predominance determines constitutional typology, leading to inter-individual biological variability.

Prakriti governs anatomical features, physiological responses, psychological tendencies, disease susceptibility, and adaptability to environmental influences. It remains constant throughout life and serves as the cornerstone for personalized health maintenance, disease prevention, and therapeutic planning in Ayurveda.

Ageing (*Vriddhavastha*), described as the terminal phase of life, is characterized by gradual decline in tissue strength, sensory perception, metabolic efficiency, and mental faculties. Classical Ayurvedic literature attributes this degenerative phase primarily to Vata dominance, with significant contributory influence of Pitta in accelerating catabolic processes. Hence, constitutional predisposition, especially Pitta-dominant Prakriti, plays a decisive role in the rate and quality of ageing.

This conceptual review explores the Ayurvedic understanding of ageing in relation to Prakriti, highlighting constitutional susceptibility and its implications for healthy longevity.

2. Materials and Methods

The present study was designed as a conceptual and narrative review to analyze the interrelationship between Prakriti and the process of ageing from an Ayurvedic perspective. The methodology primarily involved a systematic exploration of classical Ayurvedic literature supported by relevant modern scientific publications.

2.1 Sources of Data

Classical Ayurvedic texts constituted the primary source of material for this study. These included *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with their authoritative commentaries. References related to Prakriti, Jara (ageing), Vriddhavastha, Dosha predominance, and degenerative changes were identified and compiled.

Secondary sources included standard modern medical textbooks and peer-reviewed research articles addressing ageing, senescence, metabolism, and constitutional variability. Relevant electronic databases and academic websites were also explored to obtain contemporary scientific interpretations of ageing.

2.2 Method of Analysis

Collected references were critically reviewed and interpreted to extract conceptual descriptions related to:

- Development and classification of Prakriti
- Ayurvedic description of ageing and its stages
- Dosha-specific influence on degenerative changes
- Constitutional susceptibility to early or delayed ageing

The extracted information was then systematically compared and correlated to establish a coherent understanding of how Prakriti influences the ageing process.

2.3 Study Design

As this was a literary and conceptual analysis, no clinical intervention, human or animal subjects, or statistical evaluation was involved. Ethical clearance was therefore not required.

3. Observations and Results

3.1 Observations

The present conceptual review was conducted through a critical analysis of classical Ayurvedic texts and available modern literature related to Prakriti and ageing. The following observations were derived from the systematic evaluation of textual references:

1. Classical Ayurvedic literature consistently describes Prakriti as a stable and lifelong constitutional entity, determined at the time of conception and unaltered throughout the lifespan.
2. Ageing (*Jara / Vriddhavastha*) is uniformly acknowledged as a natural and inevitable biological process, characterized by gradual degeneration of Dhatu, decline in Bala, Indriya, Smriti, and Medha, and predominance of Vata Dosha.
3. Variations in the rate and pattern of ageing are repeatedly mentioned in relation to Dosha predominance, indicating that ageing is not uniform across all individuals.
4. Textual references highlight that individuals with Pitta-predominant Prakriti exhibit early manifestations of degenerative changes such as premature greying of hair, wrinkling of skin, reduced tissue endurance, and early decline in strength.
5. The properties of Pitta Dosha—*Ushna*, *Tikshna*, *Sara*, *Amla*, and *Visra*—were observed to have a direct association with catabolic and degenerative processes, thereby influencing the ageing phenomenon.

6. Kapha-predominant Prakriti individuals were observed to possess better tissue stability, delayed degenerative changes, and comparatively longer maintenance of physical strength and vitality.
7. Samadoshaja Prakriti was consistently described as the most balanced constitutional type, showing minimal susceptibility to premature ageing and better adaptability to physiological stressors.
8. Modern literature also supports inter-individual variability in ageing, which correlates with metabolic rate, oxidative stress, and genetic predisposition—concepts comparable to Dosha-based constitutional variability described in Ayurveda.

3.2 Results

Based on the above observations, the following results were inferred:

1. Prakriti plays a decisive role in determining the quality and progression of ageing, influencing both the onset and severity of degenerative changes.
2. Individuals with Pitta-dominant Prakriti are more prone to early or premature ageing, owing to enhanced metabolic activity and increased catabolic processes.
3. Vata Dosha, which predominates in old age, further accelerates degenerative changes when associated with Pitta dominance.
4. Kapha-dominant Prakriti demonstrates a protective influence against rapid degeneration, contributing to delayed ageing and improved tissue resilience.
5. Adoption of Prakriti-opposing Ahara and Vihara, particularly Pitta- and Vata-pacifying measures, may help in delaying the onset of ageing-related changes.
6. The Ayurvedic concept of ageing aligns with modern theories of senescence that emphasize metabolic stress, tissue degeneration, and oxidative damage, thereby reinforcing the relevance of Prakriti-based preventive strategies

4. Discussion

Ayurveda aims not merely at disease management but at the attainment of a long, healthy, and purposeful lifespan. This objective is achieved through its foundational principles, among which Prakriti occupies a central position. The determination of Prakriti guides dietary regulation, lifestyle planning, seasonal adaptation, and therapeutic decision-making.

Among the Tridoshas, Pitta governs metabolism, digestion, biotransformation, and energy production. In individuals with Pitta-predominant Prakriti, these functions remain inherently heightened, resulting in increased metabolic activity and energy expenditure. Prolonged metabolic acceleration, when unsupported by adequate anabolic processes, may predispose tissues to early degeneration.

Classical descriptions of Pittaja Prakriti—such as early greying of hair, premature wrinkling, and intolerance to heat—correlate well with contemporary observations of accelerated ageing and oxidative stress. In contrast, Kapha-dominant individuals, owing to anabolic and stabilizing attributes, often exhibit delayed senescence and better tissue resilience.

Thus, ageing in Ayurveda is not uniform but constitution-specific. Designing Ahara and Vihara antagonistic to one's Prakriti, particularly pacifying Pitta and Vata in susceptible individuals, forms the cornerstone of preventive geriatric care.

5. Conclusion

Ageing and Prakriti are natural and inevitable phenomena intricately interlinked through Tridoshic regulation of bodily functions. The predominance of specific Doshas significantly influences the pace and pattern of senescence. Pitta-dominant Prakriti individuals are particularly susceptible to premature ageing due to heightened metabolic and catabolic activities, often supported by Vata in later life.

An individualized, Prakriti-oriented lifestyle incorporating appropriate diet, conduct, and preventive measures can significantly delay degenerative changes and promote healthy ageing. This Ayurvedic perspective underscores the relevance of constitutional assessment in geriatric health planning and longevity promotion.

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