

Decline of Agni as a marker of aging: an Ayurvedic geriatric perspective

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Abstract: Ayurveda recognizes *Agni* (metabolic fire) as the fundamental determinant of health and longevity. Aging (*Jara*) is a natural process characterized by *Vāta* predominance and progressive functional decline. This study explores the decline of *Agni* as a marker of aging through a literary review of classical texts including the *Brhatrayi* and *Laghu Trayi*. Analysis reveals that aging is intrinsically linked to *Agni mandya*, resulting in reduced digestive capacity and weakened tissue metabolism (*Dhātu kṣaya*). Classical descriptions of reduced vitality in the elderly parallel modern observations of metabolic slowdown and reduced cellular repair. The study highlights that maintaining *Agni* through *Ahāra*, *Vihāra*, and *Rasāyana* is vital for healthy aging.

Keywords: *Agni*, *Aging (Jara)*, *Ayurvedic Geriatrics*, *Vāta Doṣa*, *Dhātu Kṣaya*, *Metabolic Decline*

Introduction: Ayurveda places *Agni* at the center of health, stating "*Rogah sarve api mandāgnau*" (all diseases arise from impaired *Agni*). As life progresses toward old age, *Agni* naturally weakens, leading to decreased metabolic efficiency. This geriatric phase is marked by *Vāta* predominance and cellular depletion. Understanding the relationship

between *Agni* and aging is essential for developing preventive geriatric care .

Aims and Objectives: To explore the decline of *Agni* as a conceptual and functional marker of aging from an Ayurvedic geriatric perspective .

Material and Methods: This is a literary research study based exclusively on classical Ayurvedic literature. Sources reviewed include the *Brhatrayi* (*Charaka Samhitā*, *Suśruta Samhitā*, *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya*), *Laghu Trayi* (*Madhava Nidāna*, *Bhāvaprakāśa*, *Śārṅgadhara Samhitā*), and contemporary textbooks on *Rasāyana* and geriatrics. A thematic analysis was used to synthesize concepts related to *Agni* and metabolic decline .

Observation: Classical texts describe *Agni* as responsible for digestion, tissue formation (*Dhatu Poshana*), strength (*Bala*), and longevity. Aging is identified as "*Kala-svabhava*", a natural process where *Vāta* aggravation directly opposes the qualities of *Agni*. This leads to reduced metabolic heat and malabsorption. Modern gerontology supports these findings through observations of slower metabolism and reduced enzyme activity in the elderly .

Result: Aging is intrinsically associated with *Agni mandya*. The predominance of *Vāta*

quality (*rukṣa*, *laghu*, *śīta*) accelerates tissue depletion (*Dhātu kṣaya*). *Dhatvagni* at each tissue level becomes weaker, leading to poor formation of *Rasa*, *Mamsa* (muscle mass), and *Asthi* (bone strength) .

Discussion: While modern science focuses on cellular senescence and mitochondrial inefficiency, Ayurveda identifies the root of aging in the weakening of metabolic fire. Age-associated symptoms like bloating and low appetite correlate with *Vāta*-induced *Agni* disturbance. Maintaining *Agni* through '*Agni Deepana*', '*Ama Pachana*', and *Vata* balancing via *Rasayana* therapy may slow degenerative processes .

Conclusions: The decline of *Agni* is a fundamental hallmark of aging in Ayurveda. Preserving *Agni* through diet, lifestyle, and *Rasayana* interventions is essential to support healthy aging and improve quality of life. *Agni* serves as a key marker of vitality and resilience in the elderly .

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