

**KAYA KALPA CHIKITSA****Dr. K. J. Lavanya Lakshmi\* and Dr. P. V. N. R. Prasad**

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Ever since man started curing illness, he began to discover the causes for illness. In his efforts to cure and prevent illness, by continuous search and research for generations, man found several methods of rejuvenating his physical body with foods, medicines, herbs, exercises and austerities. Each method showed a certain effect and some very effective methods are still in use all over the world in various places. Yet a perfect system has not been found to suit all sections of people of all countries, climates and ecological conditions. *Kaya-Kalpa Chikitsa* is a prime treatment in Ayurveda aimed at arresting degeneration of body cells, slowing down the ageing process, and for improving body immunity as a whole. It includes intake of special Ayurvedic medicines and diet and comprehensive body care programmes. The

treatment aims to return youthfulness by rejuvenating every '*dhatu*' or 'tissue' in the body and by maintaining the normal level of *Ojus* in the body. Practice of *Kaya Kalpa* involves two main exercises: Toning up the nervous system to withstand the aging process and "*Ojus* breath" - to recycle the sexual vital fluid to rejuvenate the body and postpone death. These two exercises are very simple to learn and practice daily. Generally *Kaya Kalpa* is a good practice to maintain physical and mental health, further spiritual development and rejuvenate the physical systems to withstand the aging process. The practice will help people to enjoy a happy & satisfactory life.

**KEYWORDS:** Degeneration, Rasayana, Panchakarma, Rejuvenation, Kaya Kalpa.**INTRODUCTION**

**Kaya - Kalpa** is an ancient system of bodily rejuvenation practiced in Ayurveda said to reverse the natural aging process. It is a set of specific therapies mentioned in Vedic texts that can actually reverse the physical degeneration caused by age. The belief is that *Kaya-Kalpa*

practices turn old cells into new ones, and remove all impurities and toxins that cause physical degeneration. The treatments literally transform old cells to new again. In simple, *Kaya Kalpa* is a true science of “rejuvenation” – to make young again.

From Sanskrit, *Kaya* means “body” and *Kalpa* means “transformation / transmutation.” The concept may seem really simple, but it is actually quite an extraordinary process. The main idea behind the therapies is to balance the decay of old cells with the growth of newer, younger, healthier cells. It is a reversal of metabolic activities in the body. The rate of healthy, new cells must form faster than the degeneration and death of old cells, in order to arrest the symptoms of aging. Through *Kaya-Kalpa*, one can actually suspend the ravages of time, and preserve healthy, youthful, supple tissues.

Searching deeper into the subject of *Kaya-Kalpa*, it becomes more and more of a mystery, bringing up references and inter-connections with the ancient Tamil Siddhas, Siddha medicine, Alchemy, Rasa Shastra and Tantric traditions – all somewhat mysterious subjects. It is a distinct tradition of its own, probably originating with the Siddhas, and adopted, adapted and described by spiritual aspirants in all these traditions and more following them.<sup>[1]</sup>

*Kaya-Kalpa* is a truly alchemical process of physical rejuvenation (fairly well documented) and psycho-spiritual transformation (much more subjective) which uses the same basic treatments of the traditional detoxification (*Panchakarma*) and rejuvenation (*Rasayana*) therapies of classical Ayurveda, but with a different, more specific goal, extending the lifespan.

The word “*Kaya kalpa*” is not to be found in main Ayurveda texts, Charaka Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya. But detailed descriptions of *Rasayana* /Rejuvenation treatments, which sounded exactly like *Kaya Kalpa* process, are seen in original Ayurvedic Classics. The word seems to come from the Siddha tradition, one of the oldest systems of medicine in India. The principles and doctrines of this system have a close similarity to Ayurveda, with specialization in Iatro Chemistry, Rasa Shastra.<sup>[2]</sup> However, Siddha medicine has made unique and significant contribution to therapeutics, pharmacy and developed a discipline called *Kaya Kalpa* designed for longevity with a complete freedom from illness.<sup>[3]</sup>

**BACK-GROUND**

*Kaya Kalpa* treatments are said to be over 10,000 years old, and its secrets have been highly guarded by the *Siddhas*. The science of life extension was such an exclusive practice, that *Kaya kalpa* was only undertaken by royalty and *Rishis* (holy sages). Only those with money, time to devote, and spiritual discipline could undergo such intense practices.

Ayurveda shows the way to attain a high standard of health, vim, vigour, vitality longevity and solving the riddle of old age, through rejuvenation, *Kaya-Kalpa*.<sup>[4]</sup> Chyavana and other sages of yore who had a broken and debilitated constitution on account of old age, renewed their vigour of life and lived there after for countless years by undergoing *Kaya-Kalpa* treatment. Chyavana has prepared a confection by name *Chyavanaprasha* and took it as a part of treatment.

Mandavya *Rishi* who lived in the Vindhya Mountains took an Elixir. He got perpetual youth through the use of drugs. *Kaya Kalpa* is that form of treatment which restores the aged and debilitated body to its pristine youth and vigour, re-establishes the full potentialities of the senses and gives good health.

Between the tenth and fifteenth centuries some alchemists, called 'Siddhas' in South India were successful in their research and lived as long as they wished, and after death their bodies were impervious to decay and disintegration. Eighteen well-known saints demonstrated their longevity to the people and the people saw that their bodies did not decay after death. It has addressed the methods and drugs for longevity and enhancement of innate health. They have been divided into *Kalpa medicines*, *Kalpa practices* of life style and *Kalpa diet*. In this science 108 herbs and herbo-mineral combinations are recommended for normal individuals to boost immunity, to promote general health, for prevention of diseases (*pothu karpam*) and also for restoration of health from specific type diseases (*sirappu karpam*).

Now-a-days, there is no descendant to personally teach their system, but the processes of rejuvenation, withstanding aging and postponement of death are scattered bit by bit in the writings of the *Siddhas*. The processes to be followed are all written in obtuse language, and although written in Tamil, even a scholar cannot understand the meaning clearly today.<sup>[5]</sup>

**Three distinct processes are described in the Ayurveda to attain longevity and rejuvenation. They are**

1. Mercurial Preparations(Rasaraja Rasayana).
2. Rasayana herbs and.
3. Aachara Rasayana.<sup>[6]</sup>

**The Science:** *Kaya Kalpa Chikitsa* is a progeny of Ayurveda, a holistic approach to science of healing. This secret healing technique is being used in India for thousands of years by religious healers to rejuvenate and give longevity to royalty and holy sages. *Kaya Kalpa* treatments reverse the effects of time and regenerate the entire body, mind and spirit. The aim is to return youthfulness by rejuvenating each and every *Dhatu* or Tissue in the body and to maintain the normal level of *Ojus*.

**The term "*Kaya Kalpa*" has three meanings**

- 1) Withstanding the aging process.
- 2) Maintaining youthfulness, and.
- 3) Postponement of death until the time one wishes.

When the body is not in harmony, it causes distress, disease and discomfort. *Kaya Kalpa* Therapy focuses on curing degenerative diseases and prolonging life by harmonizing the mind, body and psyche through

- Purification
- Nourishment
- Rejuvenation

#### **Benefits**

- Retards the aging process
- Improves immunity, vigour and vitality
- Corrects metabolism
- Revitalizes body, mind and soul
- Repairs worn-out tissues
- Improves memory power & intelligence
- Relieves stress and strain
- In cancer treatments to eliminate telomerase-independent mechanisms of turning normal cells into "immortal" cancer cells.

### Essentiality

Changing lifestyles (lack of exercise, untimely food intake, unsuitable environment conditions and pollution) are seen in many young urbanites fall victim to perennial health problems like diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, osteoporosis, spondylosis, psychosomatic problems, stress and strain, etc. There has also been an alarming increase in the number of diseases and disorders caused by synthetic drugs, prompting a switchover to traditional medicine. These factors lead to the need for *Kaya kalpa Chikitsa* which is best done for either sex before the age of 50.

### The Procedure

“According to Sushruta the Rasayana treatment should be performed on the subject either in youth or in the middle age.<sup>[7]</sup> It will not bestow the desired results, if it is performed when old age or decrepitude has already set in.”

In a city, at an auspicious place, where articles required are available and which is devoid of too much breeze, and other causes of fear, a white – house (made white by painting with slaked lime) having three compartments one inside the other with small openings should be constructed facing North or in the North side of the city free from smoke, Sun-light, dust, wild-animals, women and idiots etc. It should be equipped with all the necessary medical equipment including medicines and made clean by washing and painting etc.<sup>[8]</sup>

Further, on an auspicious day after worshipping those who are to be worshipped, the individual should enter the house clean (both body & mind). There he is subjected to purificatory procedures like emesis and purgation to get his earlier strength and get comfortable.<sup>[9]</sup>

Then the person, who has undergone oleation and sudation therapies earlier, should drink hot water with the paste of *Haritaki, Amalaki, Saindhava, Nagara, Vacha, Haridra, Pippali, Vidanga and Guda*; by this he purges without any difficulty.<sup>[10]</sup>

Further, the person who has thus been purified and who has followed by regimen of liquid diet after purification should be given food made with *yava* only added with ghee for 3 – 5 or 7 days till the old faeces (lurking inside) gets purified.<sup>[11]</sup>

Having conditioned the alimentary tract in this way, the person should begin to consume the Rejuvenatory Medicine that is suitable for his constitution after thoroughly considering his habits etc.<sup>[12]</sup>

He should lead a life of celibacy, courage and faithfulness by controlling senses, granting gifts, compassion, truthfulness and righteous activities always thinking of divine beings, sleeping and keeping awake in a proper manner, desirous of medicines, speaking pleasant words. The intensive seclusion, spiritual rites, and ‘drugs’ used in the *Kuti-praveshika* process seem to be what brought about the storied re-growth of skin, hair and teeth and the final outcome of *Kaya Kalpa Chikitsa*.

**Kayakalpa – Modern Times:** First of all, one is sequestered for about 90 days. The patient is to remain in a “*Kuti*” a specially built closed cottage or hut, where light does not enter. During those three months, they remain in the darkness, shielded from sunlight and outside visitors. There, they begin complete purification of the body through *Pancha Karma* detoxification techniques. Certain herbal pastes are rubbed onto the body to exfoliate, and then allowed to dry, drawing out toxins.

Medicinal plants, leeches, sweating and vomiting therapies are used for further detoxification of every organ system. During this time, diet is very minimal, perhaps eating only once a day, or even fasting on liquids. Some yogis drank only warm cow’s milk, considered sacred by Hindu’s, during the whole process. Specialized salts were ingested to preserve the body.

After weeks of cleaning the body of all built up impurities, it is time to re-nourish tissues at the deepest levels. *Abhyanga* (massages), mineral baths, *Shiro dhara*, sacred essential oils and precious gems were used to anoint the body. At this time, the immune boosting *Rasayana* herbs and fresh juices were administered.

These tonics are full of antioxidants, fighting free radical damage. There are legends of rare, specialized *Rasayanas*, such as the elusive “*Soma*” plant.<sup>[13]</sup>

After their morning spa therapies, patients spent the majority of their time performing tapas, meditating, reciting *mantras*, and practicing yogic breath. This time of hibernation not only cleansed their physical body but transformed their subtle and emotional bodies as well. They release all stuck emotions, anger and grief. They clear karmas of past lives through inward reflection. They often had visions of God, bestowing blessings upon them, and filling them

with light. Universal knowledge is revealed to them from the cosmos. They cultivate inner peace.<sup>[14]</sup>

After the “*Kuti-pravesika*” (living in the dark cottage, sequestered for 90 days) the person emerges completely transformed. The old grey hair falls out and is replaced by black hair. Old teeth fell out, replaced by new teeth. Complexion becomes fair, wrinkles smooth out and skin’s elasticity is restored. Eye sight and hearing drastically improve. Age related joint / body pain is gone. Memory and concentration is sharp, and there is spiritual clarity. The normal gross, dense vibrations of the physical body are sped up to a lighter, subtler frequency.

The following are some of the procedures of the procedures being employed as a part of Kaya-Kalpa Chikitsa in contemporary times.<sup>[15]</sup>

- |                                                                     |                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| • Abhyanga & Sweda                                                  | Patra pinda sweda ( <i>Elakkizhi</i> ) |
| • Sashtika shali pinda sweda ( <i>Njavarakizhi</i> )                | <i>Udvartana</i>                       |
| • Shiro Vasti                                                       | Kati Vasti                             |
| • Greeva Vasti                                                      | Janu Vasti                             |
| • Hrid Vasti / Uro Vasti ( <b>Cardiothoracic region</b> )           |                                        |
| • Netra Vasti / Netra Tarpanam                                      | Chakra Vasti ( <b>Umbilicus</b> )      |
| • Gala Vasti (Front of Neck)                                        | Shirolepana                            |
| • Dhara (Ekanga/ Sarvanga; Taila/Takra/Dhanyamla/ Ksheera/ Kashaya) |                                        |

*Kuti pravesha* method is suitable only to those who are free of all encumbrances and who afford all the paraphernalia required. For others who do not have these, the best is *Suryamarutika* or *Vatatapika*.

*Vatatapika* is the type of treatment the modern practitioners of Kaya Kalpa are providing for the most part, though the extended seclusion seems to have been a key component of the ancient Kaya-kalpa process. These healers want to bring the rejuvenatory and spiritualizing benefits to the stressed out modern world, but as one practitioner says: “The air and light Kaya Kalpa (*Vatatapika*) is not directed so much at physical rejuvenation, rather at transformation of the emotions, thoughts, and spirit”.<sup>[16]</sup>



## Selected Herbs and Their Mode of Action

S. No	HERB <sup>[17]</sup>	Method	Indication	Action
1.	<b>Shastika – Shali Dhanya</b> ( <i>Oryza sativa</i> )	<b>Rice</b> is to be ground & mixed with <b>Cow's Ghee</b> and taken for <b>40 days</b>	Rasayana	High Phenolic content and has antioxidant action. Prevents bowel Cancer
2.	<b>Kamala</b> ( <i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> )	<b>Stamens</b> powder is taken in a dose of <b>1 -2 gm.</b> mixed with either <b>Ghee or Honey</b> for <b>40 days</b>	Male Sterility & Deafness	Isorhamnetin Glycoside, Isorhamnetin rutoside has Anti-oxidant potential & are Free radical scavengers.
3.	<b>Bhumymlaki</b> ( <i>Phyllanthus niruri</i> )	<b>Whole plant</b> is ground to fine paste & taken by mixing either in <b>Milk or Butter-Milk</b> for <b>40 days</b>	Eye & Liver diseases, Giddiness & Vomiting.	Has high content of Vitamin C. Prevents DNA damage, Oxidative stress and Lipid peroxidation
4.	<b>Bhringaraja</b> ( <i>Eclipta alba</i> )	Dried and <b>powdered whole plant</b> is taken for <b>one month</b> each with <b>Coconut water and Honey</b>	Improves Body's Complexion, Eye-sight and Memory	Has Enzymatic & Non-Enzymatic anti-oxidants and free radical scavenging activity.
5.	<b>Kumari</b> ( <i>Aloes barbadensis</i> )	<b>Dried powder of Fleshy leaves</b> is taken in a dose of <b>1 -2 gm</b> is taken for <b>40 days</b>	Gray-hair, Chronic Piles & For Longevity	Contains Poly -saccharides & flavanoids, Anti-tumour, Antigenotoxic & Chemo-preventive
6.	<b>Ardraka</b> ( <i>Zingiber officinalis</i> )	Outer skin is peeled off and is cut into <b>small pieces</b> and is <b>soaked in Honey.</b> <b>2-3 slices</b> are taken <b>daily</b> for <b>40 days</b>	Improves Eye-sight, Body strength & Prevents Senility.	Diarylheptanoid acts as Antioxidant. Vanilloid induces mitochondrial release of Cytochrome- C mediated apoptotic pathways.
7.	<b>Tulasi</b> ( <i>Ocimum sanctum</i> )	<b>Leaf-juice or Root</b> is boiled with <b>Oil Applied</b> to body for <b>40 days</b>	Kapha, Vata diseases and Delirium	Increases superoxide dismutase, glutathione and thiols that are free radical scavengers.
8.	<b>Bhallataka</b> ( <i>Semecarpus anacardium</i> )	<b>Nuts</b> are prepared into a <b>Lehyam</b> and are taken in dose of <b>2-4 gm</b> for <b>40 days</b>	Improves Appetite, Digestion, Luster & Good Voice	Rich in flavanoids. Increases Glutathione, Catalase, Superoxide dismutase and acts as anti-oxidants.
9.	<b>Ashwagandha</b> ( <i>Withania somnifera</i> )	<b>Powdered Root</b> is taken in a dose of <b>2 gm</b> mixed with <b>Ghee</b> for <b>40 days</b>	Neurological conditions. Increases Life-span, Strength & Luster	Prevents DNA damage and scavenges active free radicals generated by mutagens.
10.	<b>Kapittha</b> ( <i>Limonia acidissima</i> )	<b>Juice or Pulp</b> is prepared into a <b>Pickle</b> and taken for <b>6 months</b>	Prevents Senility, Gray-hair and Ascites	Increases Superoxide dismutase, catalase and prevents peroxidation
11.	<b>Nimba</b> ( <i>Azadirachta indica</i> )	<b>Tender &amp; Mature leaf</b> is ground with <b>Salt</b> and <b>Ajwain</b> and is taken for <b>40 days.</b> (To start on <b>Rohini Nakshatra</b> )	Anti- Viral	Presence of strong anti-oxidant activity, anti-tumour and chemo-preventive activity



12.	<b>Nimbu</b> (Citrus limon)	<b>Juice or Fruit</b> prepared into <b>Pickle</b> taken for <b>6 months</b>	Prevents Senility, Gray hair & Ascites	Decreases lipid peroxidation & increases superoxide dismutase.
13.	<b>Mandukaparni</b> (Centella asiatica)	Leaves can be used as a <b>Curry</b> or taken <b>mixed with Japatri</b> for <b>40 days</b>	Enhances Memory & Intelligence and effective in Liver disorders	Inhibitory effect on deoxyribose gradation and hydroxyl scavenging activity
14.	<b>Upodika</b> (Basella alba)	<b>Leaf</b> is prepared as a <b>Curry</b> and taken for <b>40 days</b>	Improves Body strength and Libido	Phenols, flavanoids and Ascorbic acid are high. Inhibitory effect on deoxyribose gradation and hydroxyl scavenging activity.
15.	<b>Hareetaki</b> (Terminalia chebula)	<b>Powdered</b> Epicarp is taken in a dose of <b>500 – 1000 mg</b> in the evening for <b>6 months</b>	Rejuvenator, Prevents Senility, Grey hair, Pitta & Liver disorders	Has rich tri-terpenoid content and chebulic acid. Regulates glutathione and has anti-oxidant potential
16.	<b>OTHER HERBS USED COMMONLY</b>	<b>Kharjura</b> (Phoenix dactylifera), <b>Shatavari</b> (Asparagus racemosus), <b>Lavanga</b> (Syzygium aromaticum), <b>Maricha</b> (Piper nigrum), <b>Bilwa</b> (Aegle marmelos) <b>Amalaki</b> (Emblica officinalis) & <b>Jiraka</b> (Cuminum cyminum), <b>Soma, Nila, Nari, Padma</b> etc.		

## CONCLUSION

Kaya Kalpa therapy, always used for rejuvenation and increased longevity, has however, transformed over the years: from a highly secretive, selective, and intensive treatment first developed by saintly adepts who used it to immortalize their physical bodies. *Kaya-kalpa* may include a range of therapies, such as herbal or mineral preparations, postures of various schools of *Kalpa Yoga*, breathing practices, aroma therapy, body oils, herbs allied products, life-style guidelines and constitutional assessments. Though most of us may not be able to undergo the classic “**Kaya-kalpa** rejuvenation” as described by ancient texts, there are many aspects of this Ayurvedic anti-aging regimen that we can practice to stay young and combat the disease process. Starting with “Pancha karma” detoxification, and then taking in right foods & herbs to nourish us, while releasing negative emotional patterns, we can enjoy longevity and spiritual well being.

Although the pharmacokinetics of *Kaya kalpa* herbs were not revealed 5000 years ago by the ancient Siddhars, Recent researches on herbs has enlightened that the components of *Kaya kalpa* herbs seems to target the reactive oxygen species which are significant cancer causing agents. A deeper exploration in the areas of *Kaya-kalpam* can fetch us to a break-through in combating various diseases and promote healthy living.

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