



ROLE OF PANCHKARMA IN MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS

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ABSTRACT

Menopause, a unique experience for every woman, is the permanent cessation of a woman's monthly menstrual period and ovulation. Women enter an oestrogen deficient phase during menopause, which causes the numerous physical and psychological symptoms. In *Ayurveda*, menopause is depicted as "*Jarapakwa Avastha*" of body and correlates as *Rajonivrutti*. Menopausal symptoms (*Rajonivrutti Janya Lakshana*) are viewed in *Ayurveda* as an imbalance of the *Tridosha* (*Vata, Pitta, Kapha*) and *Dhatukshaya* that arises as a normal and progressive result of ageing. In the present scenario menopausal health needs priority as it effects women's physical as well as mental health. *Ayurveda* suggests several options for a healthy and pleasant transition into menopause. Timely intervention with ayurvedic treatment can provide an effective way to manage these symptoms. This article deals with the role of *Panchakarma* therapies along with *Rasayana chikitsa* in managing the psychological manifestations of menopause.

KEYWORDS: Menopause, *Rajonivrutti*, *Dhatukshaya Lakshan*, *Panchkarma* therapy.

INTRODUCTION

The word 'Menopause' comes from the Greek word 'Menos' (month) & 'Pausis' (cessation). Menopause is a permanent cessation of menstruation for 12 consecutive months. It is a normal and progressive transitional period of adjustment between active and passive ovarian function. According to ayurveda it related with *Rajonivrutti* and occurs at the age of fifty in *Jarapakwa sareera* (old age). In early menopause oestrogen hormone level declines and the symptoms and disorders related with oestrogen insufficiency occurs.^[1] With increased life expectancy, a woman now spends nearly a third of her life in this stage.^[2] It happens gradually over time and is a natural result of ageing. During this time, women are frequently impacted by numerous *Manasa Bhavas*, which eventually causes physical and psychological disorders. As a frequent and distressing issue, it necessitates effective and safe treatment. *Ayurveda* suggests several options for a healthy and pleasant transition into menopause. Timely intervention with ayurvedic treatment can provide an effective way to manage these symptoms. This article deals with the role of *Panchakarma* therapies along with *Rasayana chikitsa* in managing the psychological manifestations of menopause.

Factors responsible for early menopause

- 1. Genetic factor-** Women having a family history of early menopause are 60% more prone towards it. Furthermore, events that occur in utero when a female's ovaries are growing may result in a lower number of eggs producing cells, which might limit a woman's reproductive life span.
- 2. Factors related to life style**
 - Poor nutrition
 - Smoking and alcohol consumption increases the risk of early menopause.
 - Medical conditions such as bilateral oophorectomy, pelvic injuries that damage ovaries, chemotherapy and pelvic radiation can initiate menopause earlier than usual
 - Stress, strain & mental tension leads to early menopause.
- 3. Hormonal factors-** Oestrogen, progesterone, and testosterone levels all fall with time, which is a natural trait, but as one gets older, the swings and ratios between these hormones grow more dramatic. When the body is unable to balance these variations in hormone levels, women may experience menopausal symptoms.

SIGN AND SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE

In early phase of menopause, oestrogen levels rapidly decline, causing symptoms to appear more severely and last longer.

- Hot flushes
- Mood changes like Anxiety/Depression
- Insomnia
- Palpitations
- Weight gain
- Cystitis
- Vaginal dryness
- Atrophic vaginitis
- Loss of libido
- Osteoporosis

AYURVEDIC ASPECT OF MENOPAUSE

In Ayurveda, Menopause (*Rajonivritti*) means end of *Artava pravritti* (menstrual blood). It is a natural process and occurs in *Jarapakwa sareera* at the age of fifty years.^[3] Menopausal symptoms occur due to imbalance of the *Dosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*).

NIDANA OF RAJONIVRITTI

Some of the factors described by the *Acharyas* in the context of "*Rajah Utpathi*" *Hetus*, such as *Rasa dhatu*, *Rakta dhatu*, and *Ahararasa*, can also be considered as causes of *Rajah Nivritti*. Depletion of these factors can lead to *Rajah Nivritti*. Some other factors include.^[4]

- *Swabhava*
- *Jarapakvasharira* due to *Kala*
- *Dhatukshaya*
- Effect of *Dosha*
- *Vayu*
- *Abhighata*

SAMPRAPTI OF RAJONIVRITTI

Nidana Sevana + Vriddha Avastha



LAKSHANA OF RAJONIVRITTI

There is no direct reference in classics to *Rajonivritti Lakshanas*, the clinical symptoms manifested by the patients are of *Dhatukshayaja Lakshanas* associated with vitiated *Doshas*. In Ayurveda menopause is the period which marks the transition from the *Pitta* dominating middle age of life to *Vata* dominating old age of life. Hence the maximum symptoms in menopause are due to imbalance of *Vata dosha* like *Sirah-shool* (Headache), *Hrid spandan* (palpitation), *Bal kshaya* (weakness), *Aadhmana* (distension of abdomen), *Vibandha* (constipation), *Anidra/alpanidra* (insomnia), *Chinta* (anxiety), *Vishada* (depression), *Katishoola* (low backache), *Sandhi vedana* (joint pain), *Anavasthita Chitatvam* (mood swing) etc.

If *Pitta Sanchay* (accumulation) is more over the years, symptoms like *Osha* (Hot flushes), *Atisveda* (Sweating), *Amarsha* (Irritability), *Yoni Daha* (Burning sensation), *Yoni Daurgandhya* (Foul smelling), *Mutradaha* (Burning sensation in Urine) are seen, during this phase.

Kapha tendency is towards *Atisthaulaya* (Weight gain), *Yoni Kandu* (Itching), *Yoni Srava* (Vaginal discharge) etc.

MANAGEMENT

After analysing the *Samprapti* and *Lakshanas*, we may deduce that *Vata-Pittahara Chikitsa*, combined with *Srotosodhana* (*Panchkarma* therapies) and *Rasayana chikitsa*, can be beneficial in the treatment of menopausal symptoms. It is preferable to balance the aggravating elements in the early menopause period, so that the intensity of menopausal symptoms is significantly less or even non-existent.

1. **SHROTOSHODHAN CHIKITSA-** *Panchakarma* therapies in the form of *Antah-parimarjana* and *Bahiparimarjana Chikitsa* can play a significant role in controlling the psychological manifestations of *Rajonivritti*.

Role of Antah-parimarjana Chikitsa

1. **Snehapana-** It helps in pacifying the aggravated *Doshas*. Blood brain barrier (BBB) is a lipophilic molecular structure, lipids and lipid-soluble medicines can easily pass from it. As a result, medications administered in the form of lipids absorb quickly in the target locations of the central nervous system. *Ghee* is known to contain antioxidant properties that work on and repair degenerative brain cells. It also helps to normalise chemical alterations in the brain by regulating neurotransmitters.^[5]

2. **Virechana Karma-** It is the expulsion of vitiated *Doshas* through *Adhomarga* (anal passage).^[6] It is a major line of treatment for morbid *Pitta Dosha* along with morbid *Kapha* and *Vata Dosha*. So, Anger, agitation, sleep disturbances, mood swings, and other common menopausal symptoms can be effectively treated with *Virechana Karma*. For this *Trivrit Avaleha*,

Gandharvahastadi Eranda Taila, Mishraka Sneha etc can be used.

3. Basti Karma- It is the administration of medicated *Kashaya* or *Sneha Dravya* inside the body through anal route. *Basti* is the supreme treatment, to treat vitiated *Vata Dosha* and thus considered as *Ardhachikitsa*.^[7] *Madhutailika basti, Vayasthapana gana siddha ksheerapaka basti, and Panchaprasutik Ksheera Basti* can be used to treat menopausal symptoms as they are *Vata Shamaka Bastis* having *Jeevaniya* and *Brimhana properties*.

Sneha Basti or *Matra Basti* is also an excellent alternative for the treatment of menopausal symptoms because it can be used at any time without causing any complications. It also aids in the regulation of the vitiated *Vata Dosha* that is prevalent during menopause. It may be used with *Sukumara Ghrita, Dhanwantara Taila* etc.

4. Nasya Karma- Nose is considered as the gateway of *Shira*.^[8] So, medicines administered through nasal route is known as *Nasya*. So, through the *Sukshma Shrotas* in the nasal route, *Sneha* reaches *Shirogata Marma* (mainly *Shringhatak Marma*) and spreads throughout the whole *Mastishka* (brain), assisting in the removal of vitiated *Doshas*. *Nasya Karma* can thus be used to manage the emotional and psychological aspects of menopause. *Brimhana Nasya* balances the *Vata* and *Pitta Doshas*. *Nasya Karma* can be administered using medicines such as *Ksheerabala Taila, Brahmi Ghrita, Madhukadi Taila*, and others. *Nasya* with *Brahmi Ghrita* helps to reduce emotional problems associated with menopause.

Role of *Bahi-parimarjana Chikitsa*

- 1. Bahya-Snehana (Abhyanga)-** It is the administration of *Sneha Dravya* all over the body. It helps in pacification of vitiated *Vata Dosha*. *Abhyanga* relieves stress, mood swings, anxiety, exhaustion, and promotes restful sleep at night. It is considered as superficial fluid technique of massage. So, massage reduces cortisol levels, the "stress" hormone and raises the levels of the neurotransmitter's serotonin and dopamine. Thus, it also aids in the relaxation of the mind and ultimately reducing the psychological aspects of menopause.
- 2. Pada-abhyanga^[9]-** It is the application of medicated *Sneha Dravya* on the foot and sole region. It applies pressure to key points on the foot to improve physical and emotional wellbeing. It enhances general health by promoting good sleep, reducing mental stress and anxiety, and relieving nerve tension.
- 3. Samvahana Karma-** It is a procedure of application of *Sneha Dravya* over body (without pressure) in specific directions (*Anuloma-* in the direction of growth of hair). It is considered as the superficial reflex technique of massage. This technique primary

affects the level of arousal, perception of pain and have been shown to have psychological symptoms.

- 4. Murdhni Taila^[10]-** It is a procedure of external administration of *Sneha* on head region, in which medicine remain in contact with the scalp for fixed duration of time. It is of four types.
 - *Shiro-abhyanga* (Application of medicated or non-medicated *Taila* or *Ghrita* on the head)
 - *Shiro Seka* (continuous pouring of medicated oil, milk, or buttermilk in a particular manner on the head, especially on the forehead)
 - *Shiro Pichu* (placing layers of cotton soaked with oil on scalp)
 - *Siro-Basti* (The retention of medicated oil on the head for a prescribed period).

These procedures control the vitiation of *Vata Dosha* in the *Murdha*. Thus, it plays a vital role in the treatment of psychological disorders. The pouring of medicated oil over the forehead in an oscillatory motion generates vibrations that calm the brain. *Dhara* may also reduce cortisol and adrenaline levels in the brain, resulting in a reduction in stress.

2. RASAYANA CHIKITSA

The primary goal of menopausal management is to strengthen and rejuvenate the reproductive system along with the whole body. *Rasayana Chikitsa* offers complete physiological and metabolic rejuvenation for ageing. It also aids in *Dhatus* regeneration, revival, and rejuvenation.

- ❖ **Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus)-** This drug is rich in phytoestrogens like saponins and flavonoids. It helps in balancing the hormonal level in the body. It nourishes the female reproductive system and controls menopausal symptoms associated with aggravated *Vata Dosha*.
- ❖ **Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera)**
 - It is an effective antioxidant and immune-modulator. It increases body strength and muscular mass.
 - It efficiently decreases vasomotor symptoms (hot flushes, night sweats, palpitation) in menopausal patients and also relieves stress.
- ❖ **Brahmi (Bacopa monnieri)-** It exhibits properties like anti-depressant and anti-oxidant. It reduces the symptoms like constipation, hot flashes, bloating, joint pain and palpitations symptoms in menopause.
- ❖ **Yasthimadhu (Glycerrhiza glabra)**
 - It contains terpenes, saponins, flavonoids and iso-flavonoids.
 - It is an excellent antioxidant, immune-modulator, antidepressant, and memory enhancer.
 - It has been shown that this plant is effective in mitigating hot flashes symptoms in menopause.
- ❖ **Triphala-** It is an excellent *Vayasthapana* (anti-ageing) drug and pacifies all the three *Doshas*.

CONCLUSION

Although menopause is a natural physiological condition, women are frequently impacted by numerous psychological conditions, which eventually leads to physical and psychological disorders. Ayurveda have different ways to overcome these menopausal symptoms. It focuses mostly on strengthening and renewing the reproductive system and the entire body. Timely intervention with proper *Panchakarma* therapy might pave the path for an effective approach to menopausal symptoms. Ayurvedic protocol, along with suitable *Panchakarma* therapies (*Antahparimarjana* and *Bahiparimarjana Chikitsa*) including *Rasayana Chikitsa*, will help to regulate the psychological aspects of *Rajonivritti*.

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