

ADROIT MENOPAUSE [RAJONIVRUTTI] BEYOND HRT – A REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

It is not menopause that is the disease, but it is the imbalance of *doshas* [specially *vata dosha*] which cause incompatible symptoms. Menopause should not be treated as a disease but enjoyed as a phase of life with some lifestyle and dietary modifications because each phase is beautiful. This natural phenomenon occurs at the age of 45-55 years. Menopause can be graceful with *ayurveda*, the ancient science of life, which gives holistic treatment that aims at hormones balance by using various herbs. The conventional treatment for various symptoms occurring as a result of cessation of menstruation includes *rasayan* therapy [for rejuvenation and to promote mental incompetence], *yoga* therapy [meditation, *asana*, breathing exercises to improve psychological wellbeing and sleep patterns], *shaman aushadhi* [for *agnideepan*, *aampachan* and *anuloman*], *sanshodhan* by *panchkarma* procedures [like *bastz*, *mridu virechan* and *shirodhara* for internal detoxification] and *satvavajaya chikitsa* [counselling and reassurance for emotional modulation].

KEYWORDS: Rajonivrutti, Yoga, Pranayama, Dhatushaya, Ayurveda, Panchkarma, Vata dosha.

INTRODUCTION

Menopause is defined as permanent cessation of menstruation at the end of reproductive life due to less ovarian follicular activity.^[1] During the reproductive phase of a woman, the drop in estrogen and progesterone triggers the release of FSH hormone which cause gradual rise in estrogen and along with LH surge which inturn cause ovulation in a normal menstrual cycle. After ovulation, the FSH and LH hormone decreases with a small increase in estrogen and menstruation starts at this

point if there is no conception. This hormonal cycle repeats itself every month.

In a menopausal woman, the number of ovarian follicles decreases and the remaining follicles unable to respond to gonadotrophins [i.e FSH and LH] resulting in absence of ovulation. And with this, estrogen production also decreases which results in variety of symptoms in a menopausal women as shown in table 1.

Table-1:

S. No.	SYSTEM	SYMPTOMS
1	CNS	Vasomotor symptoms like hot flushes, night sweats etc, sleep disturbances, cognitive disorders and anxiety.
2	Urogenital	Urinary urgency and frequency, vaginal dryness, recurrent lower UTI (Urinary tract infections).
3	Musculoskeletal	Joint pain, osteoporosis and fatigue etc.
4	Skin	Decrease skin elasticity, decrease hydration and wrinkling of skin.
5	Hairs	Increase hair loss
6	Genital	Dyspaurenia, loss of libido etc.
7	Metabolic	Increase visceral adiposity, increase weight etc.

Ayurvedic view

As per *ayurved*, after menopause, a woman enters into the *vata* phase of life from the *pita* phase. Out of 5 types of *vata*, *apana vata* plays role in all the excretory

activities of like *mala*, *mutra*, *sukra*, *artava* and *garbha*. Vitiation in this *apana vata* can leads to disturbances in any one of these functions. *Vata* increases due to *vradhavastha*, ages related *dhatushaya* and *rukhsta*.

Hence, *artava Utpatti* as well as *nishkramana* both are effected due to *apana vata* vitiation which finally leads to *rajonivrutti* [menopause].

Probable explanation of symptoms as per *ayurveda*

The depletion of *rasa dhatu* [fluid of reproductive organs] cause vaginal dryness which in turn cause

cystitis due to friction. Overactivity of *vata dosha* due to its mobile *guna* leads to overactivity of mind causing anxiety. Depletion of bone tissue cause osteoporosis. *Vata* imbalance cause imbalance of other *doshas* also [by acting as a driven force] which leads to symptoms due to other *doshas* also. The symptoms due to different *doshas* are as shown in table 2.

Table- 2:

S.No.	DOSHA	SYMPTOMS
1	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Yoni rukhsta</i> (dryness in vagina), <i>bhrama</i> (vertigo), <i>vaichitya</i> (lack of concentration), <i>chinta</i> (anxiety), <i>krichhravyavayata</i> (loss of libido), <i>maithunaashishunta</i> (pain during intercourse), <i>kativedana</i> (low bachache), <i>asthivedana</i> (bone pain), <i>bala kshaya</i> (general weakness), <i>anidra</i> (lack of sleep) and <i>vibandha</i> (constipation) etc.
2	<i>Pita</i>	<i>Swedatipravrutti</i> (excess sweating specially night sweats), <i>yonidaha</i> (burning sensation in vagina), <i>osha</i> (hot flushes), <i>yonidaurgandhya</i> (foul smelling vagina), skin rashes, <i>amarsha</i> (irritability), <i>mutradaha</i> (burning micturition) and angry etc.
3	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Yoni kandu</i> (itching in vagina), <i>yonisrava</i> (discharge from vaginal orifice), <i>Sthoulaya</i> (weight gain), lethargy and <i>vishada</i> (depression) etc.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Menopause is a time in every women life in which she can go deeper into spirituality as they move away from their reproductive years and responsibilities.^[2] So a woman have more time for her inner growth after menopause.

Diagnose of Menopause

- Cessation of menstruation for 12 consecutive months.
- Presence of menopausal symptoms like hot flushes, atrophic vaginitis, mood swings, weight gain, fatigue, insomnia and night sweats etc.
- If oestradiol is < 20 pg/ml.
- Serum FSH and LH >40 mIU /ml for 3 times done weekly.^[3]
- Maturation index showing features of low estrogen (10/85/5) in vaginal cytology.

Kala of Rajonivrutti

Our *Acharyas* has described *rajonivrutti* (menopause) age as 50 years. There is no controversy regarding the age of menopause as almost all the *acharya* has mentioned the same age.

Types of Rajonivrutti

Acharya susruta has described 4 major *vyadhis* (disease) as *agantuja*, *shariraja*, *manasa* and *swabhavika*.^[4] As *rajonivrutti* is a natural phenomenon so we can consider it under *swabhavika vyadhi*. *Swabhava bala* includes *kshudha* (hunger), *pipasa* (thirst), *nidra* (sleep), *jara* (aging) and *mrityu* (death) as per *acharya susruta*. These can also be acquired in nature which are called as *doshaja* so they can also be classified as *kalakruta* and *akalakruta*. Likewise *rajonivrutti* can be of 2 types *kalakrutta* and *akalakrutta*.

1. *Kalakrutta rajonivrutti* – if *rajonivrutti* occurs at its probable age i.e 50 years.

2. *Akalakrutta rajonivrutti* – if *rajonivrutti* occurs after its probable age.

Nidana of Rajonivrutti

The specific reason for *rajonivrutti* are not described in our *ayurvedic samhitas*. There is no cause behind destruction of anything, infact the absence of factors responsible for it's formation are the causes for it's destruction according to *swabhavoparamvada* (theory of natural destruction). Similarly, absence of factors which are responsible for the formation of *artava* is the cause of menopause. These factors are-

1. *Kala*: *Vaya* is described in *ayurveda* on the basis of *kala*. Different changes in the body occurs as per the *vaya* (age) due to *doshic* predominancy. So menopause also occurs as an attribute of *kala* and the process of aging begins after the age of 50.
2. *Dhatuparipuranata*: Fullness or presence of the *dhatu* responsible for *rajo Utpatti* at a particular age and not before or after it. The stage or *vaya* of life in which the *dhatu* deteriorates and *rajo Utpatti* stops, is the stage of *rajonivrutti* (menopause).
3. *Swabhava*: As per *ayurveda*, females have *swabhava* of *raja* production at a specific *vaya* (age) due to *dhatuparipurnata*. Also there is a *swabhava* of *rajonivrutti*.
4. Everything which is produced has to be destroyed in this universe as nothing is eternal in this world so the *artava*.
5. *Vayu*: *Vayu* is the prime factor responsible for *rajo Utpatti*, now due to its vitiation the process of *rajo Utpatti* deteriorates and the body achieves *rajo nivrutti* (menopause).
6. *Karma*: It can be *daiva* (*purva janama karma*) or *pourush* (*karma* of this *janama*). Various factors showing the importance of *karma* in *rajo Utpatti* given in the text are *swabhava samsidhi* (favourable conditions), *kalayoga* (chances) and *aharaj viharaja* (food and lifestyle).

Management of the rajonivrutti as per ayurveda

As prevention is better than cure, one should follow the diet and lifestyle changes along with some *ayurvedic herbs* in the early pre-menopausal phase so that the aggravation of *doshas* can be controlled and this transition can be made more adroit.

Mostly *vata* symptoms are dominant followed by other *dosha's* symptoms. Post menopause is a *vata dosha* dominating phase of life. Thus the menopausal signs and symptoms are similar to those which are present in case when *vata dosha* rises.^[5]

In *ashtang hridaya*, it is stated the vagina never get distorted without aggravation of *vata dosha* so *vata* should be treated first then *pitta* and *kapha dosha*.^[6] In *vata* predominating phase of life body experiences more *vata dosha* qualities. *Vata* qualities are dry, light, rough and mobile.

Depletion of *ras dhatu* causes vaginal dryness which leads to friction hence cystitis. Mobile *guna* of *vata* causes overactivity of mind and anxiety. Degraded muscles tissue cause atrophic vaginitis and urinary incontinence. Constipation is due to decreases in hydration, destruction of bone tissue cause hair loss and osteoporosis.

Ayurvedic diet regime

Sr. no.	Dominating Dosha.	Dietry advice
1	<i>Vata</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take warm food. Avoid spicy and hot foods. Include ghee, whole avocados, nuts and seeds in diet. Sour and salty food balances <i>vata</i> along with sweet. Decrease intake of caffeine, cold drinks and any other packed food.
2	<i>Pitta</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take cold food. Increase intake of water and watery fruits (like melons, grapes and mangoes etc.). Avoid hot drinks and very spicy foods.
3	<i>Kapha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take dry and warm food. Use turmeric and ginger in diet. Take whole grains and legumes. Avoid sugar, cheese and any cold foods.

Lifestyle advice

S.no.	Dosha	Lifestyle advice
1	<i>Vata</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oil massage Medication <i>Yoga</i>
2	<i>Pitta</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meditation Oil massage Mild to moderate Exercise
3	<i>Kapha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermittent fasting Early eating (before 6 pm)

Herbs advised

S.no.	Dosha	Herbs
1	<i>Vata</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Cardamomum (elettaria cardamomum)</i> <i>Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera)</i> <i>Arjuna (Terminalia arjuna)</i> <i>Zizuphus (ziziphus jujube)</i>
2	<i>Pitta</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Amla (emblica officinale)</i> <i>Aloe vera (aloe barbadensi)</i> <i>Shatavri (asparagus racemosus)</i> <i>Saffron (crocus sativus)</i> <i>Sandalwood (Santalum alba)</i>
3	<i>Kapha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Guggul (commiphora mukul)</i> <i>Haritaki (terminalia chebula)</i> <i>Cinnamon (cinnamonum verum)</i> <i>Mustard (brassica juncea)</i>

- *Panchkarma* therapy- By some therapies like *snehana*, *shirodhara*, *basti* and *mridu virechana* the channels of body are purified and the vitiated *doshas* and toxins are removed from the body. *Shirodhara* is advised for anxiety and anger issues in the menopausal patients. Menopause is the *vata* phase of the life and *basti* is the best treatment for *vata dosha*. The general purpose of the *panchakarma* therapies is to loosen, liquefy and remove the vitiated substances and *doshas* from their abnormal sites in peripheral tissues via their natural pathways of elimination.^[7]

- *Yoga* therapy- *Yoga* ensures physical, mental as well as spiritual well being. *Yoga* has eight limbs – *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharna*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. *Asana* (postures like *padmasana* and *vajrasana* etc), *pranayama* (like *sheetli pranayama*, *ujjayi pranayama* etc), *anulom-viloma* (breathing exercise), *dhyana* (meditations) are advised the menopausal women as they all in a combined manner decreases the risk of various diseases like cardiovascular and bone diseases etc. It will helps in emotional modulation of the menopausal women.

- *Weight management*- As a result of low circulating estrogen level, a menopausal woman gains weight. Gaining weight can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and metabolic disorders. Excess calorie intake, sedentary lifestyle along with lack of awareness about weight related complications are the key factors for increasing weight in menopausal women. Sometimes women of this age presents with body image issues, sexual disturbances and mood disorders due to which they increases their eating episodes to combat this pshycological stress. By correcting the dietary habits and some lifestyle changes along with some *ayurvedic* herbs, it can be controlled.

- *Sansaman chikitsa*- Some *vatanuloma dravaya* like *haritki* along with *balya* and *agnideepana dravayas* are prescribed to the women of this age to decrease the *doshic* symptoms in menopausal women. As body experiences more *vata* qualities in this transition phase, some anti-*vata* herbs are advised to take on a daily basis as a dietary supplement.

- *Rasayan chikitsa*- *Medhya rasayana* like *brahmasayana* and *chyavanaprasha* increase the longevity, vitality and immunity and also restore memory and intelligence. *Acharya charaka* has described four *rasayana* – *shankhpushpi*, *mandukaparni*, *yastimadhu* and *guduchi*.^[8] They also increase the performance of the sense organs, strengthens all *dhatu*s of body, decreases the vasomotor symptoms and are anti-aging in properties. So every menopausal women should be given *rasayana* in her diet for regulating her symptoms due to change in the *doshic* predominance.

- *Satvavajaha chikitsa*- Counselling of the women decreases half of her problems as pshycology is the main

concern in these females. It will help them to cope up with emotional trauma and to adjust with the respond of the body in this transition of the life. So counselling can be added as a fundamental part of treatment in every post- menopausal women.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the menopause is nature's call for paying more attention to self, one should make it wonderful by some do's and don't's. whole of the physiology of genitourinary tract is controlled by *apana vata*. So it is the main *dosha* which should be treated along with consideration of syptoms due to other *doshas*.

By the *sansamana chikitsa*, *vatanuloma* action of the drugs used help in correction of vitiated *apana vata* which inturn decrease the symptoms. *Panchkarma* procedures removes the toxins and *aama* from the body, hence cleanses the body channels. *Yoga* also calms the mind thus decreasing various issues of a menopausal women like overactivity of mind, anger and hot flushes etc. *Rasayana* increases longevity as it retards the aging process and protects the body from various ailments.^[7] Some *Medhya rasayana* also restore memory hence decreases the chances of alzheimer's disease. And finally phtoestrogenic diet balances the estrogen of the body hence provides the needed estrogenic role for various purposes.

HRT (Hormone replacement therapy), which is the conventional way of treatment of menopausal symptoms. It will definitely decreases the menopausal symptoms but along with this, it gives some serious alarming risks as a result of side effects like breast cancer, heart attack and Alzheimer's disease etc. HRT can be taken as a mechanism to decreases some acute symptoms which can be life threatning for one's life. Beyond HRT, *ayurvedic* protocol is a longterm approach which focuses on quality of life as well as restoration of health of the female.

CONCLUSION

Each phase of life should be enjoyed and have it's own importance. Similarly menopause has it's own importance as the woman can focus more on her inner development and her spiritual wellbeing. As it is the phase of *doshic* transition from *pitta pradhana* to *vata pradhana* state, it gives some irritating signs and symptoms to the women due to which she thought it as a burden and it ultimately decrease the quality of life. Through *ayurvedic* diet and lifestyle modifications, *panchkarma* procedures (detoxification therapies), *yoga* and *pranayama*, *rasayana* therapy and *satvavajaha chikitsa*, these symptoms can be decreased and menopause can be made more graceful.

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