

RAJONIVRITTI (MENOPAUSE) AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Menopause refers to final cessation of menstruation with group of symptoms, at which the woman gradually changes from the reproductive life into one of senescence which lead to a drastic changes in her life style. *Rajonivritti* as a diseased condition is not described separately in the classics. *Rajonivritti* is a stage of aging process which may adversely affects the physical & mental health of the woman. As woman is the most important pillar of the family, society, nation & the world. So to maintain her health, utmost care & effective treatment is needed. Ayurveda, the pride of India provides *Rasayana* therapy which is very useful in these symptoms (instead of HRT) without creating any side effects.

Keywords: Menopause, *Rajonivritti*, *Rasayana*, HRT.

INTRODUCTION

Rajonivritti / Menopause is a significant event in woman's life. It represents the end of the reproductive era. There is no detailed description of menopausal syndrome in *Ayurvedic* classics. Only few scattered references are available in *Ayurvedic* literature. All the *Acharyas* have mentioned fifty years as the age of *Rajonivritti*. *Jaravastha* (old age) is found as a causative factor of *Rajonivritti* in classics¹. Menopause is defined as permanent cessation of menstruation due to failure of ovarian follicular activity². It is a physiological process, but when it causes discomfort either to mind or body it attains *Vyadhiswaroopa* / disease state i.e., *Rajonivritti AvasthaJanya Lakshana* (menopausal syndrome) which requires medical interference. Currently the number of menopausal women is about 43 million

and projected figures in 2026 have estimated to be 103 million. According to Indian Menopause Society (IMS) research, there are about 65 million Indian women over the age of 45 and this figure is expected to creep up. Average age of menopause is around 48 years but it strikes Indian women as young as 30-35 years³.

With the rising life expectancy worldwide, significant proportion of women in menopausal & post-menopausal period will require special advice on woman health strategies. As *Rajonivritti* deals with *Jaravastha*, *Rasayana* therapy (rejuvenation therapy) is the line of treatment for the prevention of long term effects of depletion of *Dhatu*. It is one of the common problems encountered by the gynecologist in their day today practice. The treatment prescribed

in modern medicine is HRT & mild tranquilizers. In spite of its many benefits, over all compliance with HRT is poor. In addition to high price it has got drastic side effects like breast cancer, endometrial cancer, weight gain etc. It is a need of time to find out alternative treatment, which has told in our classics. So the present study was done to find out the classical aspect & its treatment.

NIRUKTI:

The term *Rajonivritti* is derived from *Rajah+Nivritti* means cessation of *Artavapravritti*. *Rajah* is taken as *Artava* i.e. menstrual blood. *Artava* along with *Stanya* is mentioned as *Upadhatu* of *rasa Dhatu*⁴.

DEFINITION OF RAJONIVRITTI:

The term *Rajonivritti* means that particular stage of life when there is complete cessation of *Artava Pravritti*.

Rajonivritti Kala: The logic behind the age of *Artavadarsana* and *Nivritti* is, the *Artava* which is the byproduct of *Rasadathu*. The functions of *Rasadhatu* are better in *Tarunaavastha* and decreases during the *Praudavastha*. All the *Acharyas* have mentioned twelve years as the age of first *ArtavaPravritti* and fifty years as that of *Artava Nivritti*⁵.

Nidana of *Rajonivritti*: The causes of *Rajonivritti* are not described in Ayurvedic classics but the cessation of the factors responsible for *Rajopravritti* may be taken as the causes of *Rajonivritti*. The *Swabhava* or nature has been assumed as the main causative factors for *Rajopravritti* and for *Rajonivritti* also⁶.

Causes:

1) *Swabhava*: *Charaka* has quoted the theory of natural destruction, according to which the body elements become disassociated however the disassociation is always there in the cause of nature. The attained reproductive capability of a woman is bound to cease in the natural course of life, which is otherwise termed as *rajonivritti*.

2) *Kala*: The *kala* is an important factor in the resistance of *Jara*. *Acharya charaka* explained that the

same after passing of sometime becomes child, young & old. The *kala* is responsible factor for the *Kshaya* and *Vridhhiavastha*.

3) Environment: Some of the favorable & unfavorable circumstances also play an important role in *Jara* process. It is understandable that a woman living under unfavorable conditions is likely to develop ageing earlier and get *Rajonivritti* earlier.

Samprapti (Pathogenesis): Here it has been clearly described i.e., the age 50yrs in female body is a declining process due to *Jara* and thus resulting in the cessation of *artavapravritti*⁷. And in other verses it has been mentioned that, *Annarasa* is responsible for the *Rasadidhatupushti* by its *Prinana* karma. When the stage of *Jara* reaches, *Annarasa* is not so favorable due to *Vatavridhhi* which occurs due to *Vardhakya* and *Vatadosha*. *Vata* due to its *Ruksha*, *LaghuGuna* act against opposite *SnigdhaGuna* and causes the diminution of *Rasadhatu*. *Rasadidhatu*s, ultimately the *Dravadhatu*s decrease which is responsible for nutrition of every cell. But when the *Ruksha*, *LaghuGunas* of *Vata* increases, the qualities of *Drava* becomes reduced and it is unable to nourish the cells, consequently the cells become *Shoshita* and become senile resulting in *Rajonivritti*.

SampraptiGhataka

Dosha : *Apanavavu*

Dushya : *Rasa, Raktadhatu*

Agni : *Jataragnimandya, Dhatvagnimandya*.

Srotas : *Artavavaha*

Adhistana: *Garbhashaya*.

Doshaavastha during *Rajonivritti*: The predominance of *Vata* in old age is well-known. The progression of ageing with *Dhatukshaya* again adds to the increase in the *Vatadosha*. However considerable decrease in *Kapha* is evident in old age and women go through the feature of *Rajonivritti*. *Agnimandya* is again an important sign of *Vardhakya* leading to decreased capability of *Jatharagni*, *Dhatwagni*, *Upadhatwagni*.

Dhatuavastha during *Rajonivritti*: The major events of ageing seem to be at the level of different *Dhatu*s.

However the classical texts point to *Rasa Dhatu* as taking lead role in the pathology of *Rajonivritti*. Gradual decline in all the *Dhatu*s is uniformly noted by ancient *Acharyas*.

Line of treatment:

Rasayana therapy is the principal line of treatment. *Rasayana* is defined as “*Yatjaravyadhinashanam*” i.e., which eradicates the disease and senility is called *Rasayana*. The medical treatment is briefly of two types. First one is “*Swasthasyaajaskaram*” and the second one “*Aturasyaroganuth*”. The distinction between these two types of treatment is not universal, because sometimes there exist some drugs which act in both ways, the second type of treatment is one in which diseases come under *Asvabhavika* classification.

The first one is targeted upon that health lacuna which stem out of *Sahajavikara* (natural phenomenon) like *Rajonivritti*. The delicate cellular machinery suffers from trauma (stress) resulting in wear and tear of different body structures and deterioration of the functional capacity of human being. For this wear and tear the procedure of revitalization and rejuvenation are used to increase the body’s resistance against the disease and retards the ageing process. The long life, increased memory and intelligence, freedom from disease, youth, excellence of lusture, complexion, voice, strength of body and mind are obtained by vitalizers. These materials are termed as “*Rasayana*”. They may be inducers of enzymes, hormones etc which the body needs for adaptation and survival during health, stress and disease. Therefore *Rasayana* is one which maintains the health, prevents the ageing process and disease⁸. *Rajonivritti* is a natural process (*Svabhavikaprakriya*). *Charaka* considered it as ‘*Svabhavinisaprakriya*’ i.e., by nature they are incurable or having no treatment. In this way the *Rajonivritti* can be managed by the *Rasayana* therapy.

Rasayanas are of three types:

1. *Aachar Rasayana* -It is basically related to life-style management .According to *sadvritta* & *Swasthavritta* , by following *Dinacharya* , *Ratricharya* & *Ritucharya* along with taking measures to relieve stress strain aging process can be delayed & symptoms associated with menopause can be minimized .Sedentary life-style enhances the osteoporosis . *Suryanamaskara*, exercise, *Yoga*, *Pranayama* can be proved very beneficial effect by relieving stress. They also improve muscle tone and hence improve urinary troubles.
2. *Ahara Rasayana* - In menopause related to *Dhatukshaya* that means *ojaskshaya*. Dietary articles consisting of black gram, milk, ghee, meat soup. Ghee has a special role in improving *sukra dhatu*. Ghee is now considered to be a good source of omega -3 fatty acids. Vegetarian diet helps in mineralization of bone. Balanced vegetarian diet is the most important aspect of the preventive management of menopause. Chick-peas, Bengal grams & black grams are good source of Phytoestrogens. Phytoestrogens plays vital role oestrogenic therapy.
3. *Dravya rasayana* -

MULTI FUNCTIONAL ACTION OF RASAYANA:

1. Promote body resistance and immunity
2. Improve mental acuity(sharpness), memory and intelligence
3. Increase Vitality
4. Stimulate metabolism
5. Accelerate anabolism
6. Activate nervous system
7. Prevent senile degeneration
8. cures degenerative disease

THUS *RASAYANA* DRUGS ARE HAVING IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN *RAJONIVRITTI*.

MODERN VIEW:

Menopause is defined as permanent cessation of ovarian function resulting in permanent *Amenorrhoea*. It takes 12 months of *amenorrhoea* to con-

firm that menopause is not set in⁹. Menopause is generally occurring between age of 40 - 45 years of average is 47 years. Climacteric is phase of weaning ovarian activity and may begin 2 - 3 years of menopause and continue for 2 - 5 years of after it. During the phase there occurs decline in ovarian activity. In starting ovulation fails, therefore no corpus luteum and hence no progesterone is secreted by the ovary. Therefore, menopause is often preceded by anovulatory and irregular menstrual cycle¹⁰. After some time graffian follicle formation also stops, estrogen activity and finally atrophy of endometrium leads to *Amenorrhoea*. As the result of fall in estrogen level, there is rebound increase of FSH and LH by ant pituitary gland.

Menopausal Symptoms -

1. Immediate -

These symptoms relate to vasomotor, psychological, sexual and urogenital symptoms.

• Vasomotor symptoms –

Hot flushes, night sweats palpitations and headache is the most distressing symptoms of menopause. These are more severe after surgical menopause. These are attributed to *pitta* and *vata doshas*.

• Psychological symptoms –

Many females are affected with anxiety, depression, decrease in libido and dementia. Ayurveda hypothesises them occur to the imbalance of *vata*.

• Urogenital symptoms –

Urinary incontinence (stress and urge) vaginal dryness and prolapsed of uterus are very important. *Ayurveda* described *Shushka Yoni* (dry vagina with atrophy of urogenital tract) and *Maha Yoni* (uterovaginal prolapse).

2. Long Term –

Skeletal system and cardiovascular system are adversely affected.

• Skeletal system –

Osteoporosis occurs rapidly after menopause in women. It is responsible for the greater incidence of fracture of spine, proximal femur, and distal radius.

Bone forming units are responsible for skeletal growth, repair, & replacement. They are under the influence of variety of regulatory factor i.e. parathormone, calcitonin, vitamin D, growth factor, gonoidal steroids calcium and phosphate etc. ERT (Estrogen replacement therapy) therefore only partially helps the re-mineralization of bones and prevention of fractures.

According to *Ayurveda* osteoporosis can be explained on the basis of excess *Vata* formation in *Pakvashaya* and *Asthi dhatu*. Therefore, we give *Agnivardhan*, *Deepana* and *Pachana* drugs.

• Cardiovascular disease –

The decline of *Ojas* (*Ashta Bindu- Para Ojas*) and *Avalambak Kapha* due to excess of *Vata* is the cause of cardiovascular disease.

Management of Menopausal Syndrome –

1) Counselling - It is very important to maintain her physical and mental status. She should be educated about proper diet. Diet should include at least 1.2 gms of Ca, vitamin A, C, E, D (400 mg) + weight bearing exercises are also necessary

2) HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) –

Only oestrogen replacement therapy is not sufficient to overcome this problem. Because many other hormones eg. DHEA, melatonin and various systems are affected in menopause. Moreover, menopause is the natural process of transition to a new phase of life for a woman.

Therapy needed in woman who is - Symptomatic for 3-6 months. High risk for CVD (Cardiovascular Disease), osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease. After surgical oophorectomy, premature menopause. Who demand prophylactic HRT Oestrogens should be given in smallest effective dose for a short possible period of 3-6 months.

Short term oestrogen therapy is beneficial in delaying osteoporosis & reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases in post-menopausal woman.

Risks of HRT-

Adverse cardiovascular status. Malignancy and thromboembolic disease. Endometrial cancer if E2 is taken alone. Breast cancer is due to progestogens if HRT is taken over 5 years¹¹. A study published in Lancet by Tungstal et al in 1998 clearly published that these are no beneficial effects occurred by HRT on cardiovascular disease. Moreover, these are reports suggesting the increased incidence of malignancy and thromboembolic disease. HRT can be at best be used for a short term to overcome some of the troublesome symptoms like hot flushes. Again not all the patients are benefited with ERT because of genetic characterization of E2 receptor. This finding supports the concept of individualization of therapy in *Ayurveda* based on individual constitution i.e. *Prakriti*.

DISCUSSION

Rajonivritti is a physiological process but when it causes discomfort either to mind or body it attains *Vyadhisvarupa* and becomes a disease status which requires medical interference. Both the term *Rajonivritti* and Menopause literally convey same meaning. Menopause is a significant landmark in female. It marks the closure of menstrual life. As it is known that *Rajonivritti* occurs due to aging process suggesting aggravation of *Vatadosha* and diminution of *Kaphadosha* and vitiated *Vata* also expel out the *Pitta* from its origin called *Ashyapakarsha*. The symptoms occurring in menopausal syndrome like; sleep disturbance, irritability, hot flushes, etc., can be co-related with *Vata Pittaja Lakshana*. In *Rajonivritti Samprapti Ghataka* are *Vata pitta Dosha* and *Dushyas* are *Saptadhatu* including *updhata* of *rakta-Aratava*. The various symptoms *Jaravastha* are more likely observed in *Rajonivrittijanya Avastha*. So it can be stated that *Rajonivritti* is part of the process of aging of female. This *Rajonivritti* condition is similar to the Menopausal Syndrome in modern science. Menopausal Syndrome is the results of the gradual waning (De-

crease) in the functions of the ovaries to produce estrogen and Progesterone, as a consequence of which, the pituitary gland becomes more active (positive feedback) and produces FSH & LH in greater quantity resulting into various somatic and psychological disturbances.

CONCLUSION

As *Rajonivritti* deals with *Jaravastha*, *Rasayana* therapy along with lifestyle modifications like dietary changes, *Yoga & Pranayama* is the line of treatment and for prevention of long term effects of depletion of *Dhatu*, *Agni*, *Srotas*. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is one and only alternative for this health hazard by which one can get spectacular achievement in combating the disease, but it has a wider range of secondary health complications like vaginal bleeding, breast cancer, endometrial cancer, gallbladder diseases etc. On the other hand, this therapy is not much effective in the psychological manifestations of this stage. Concluded that *Ayurvedic* treatment like *Rasayana*, *Yoga*, *Pranayama* is potent, cost effective and increase the longevity.

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