MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS AND PREDISPOSING FACTORS IN VIEW OF AYURVEDA: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

Bushra Khanam¹, Kamini Dhiman²

¹Final Year PG Scholar, ²Associate Professor; Department of Prasuti Tantra & Stri Roga, All India Institute of Ayurveda, New Delhi, India

Email: bushrakanam14@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Menopause is permanent cessation of menses for one year and is physiologically correlated with the decline in estrogen secretion resulting from the loss of follicular functions. Menopause, although not a disease, is related with bothersome physiological changes and varied symptoms, which smudge an important alteration in the life span of a woman. With the increasing lifespan of women, approximately one-third of a woman’s life can now be expected to be spent in the postmenopausal years. Increasing longevity also means that more women reach post menopausal age and suffer from climacteric symptoms. It is difficult to set down a definite age at which menopause will begin for every woman. This epoch varies from one woman to another. Distribution of menopausal age display a bell curve that ranges from age 40, ending around the age of 54, generally cluster around the ages 45-55. According to Ayurveda Kshaya of Raja during old age is Rajonivritti or Menopause. It is attained at the age of 50 years. Ayurveda links it with ageing. Ageing is a Vata predominant stage of life. Considering this stage as a generalized Kshaya Avastha, Rasayana therapy seems to be a treatment of choice, to nourish the Dhatus, prevents the ill effects of ageing, increase intelligence and body resistance and affects the body and mind in bringing out physical and psychological improvements.

Keywords: Ageing, Menopause, Rajonivritti, Swabhavik Vyadhi, Yapya

INTRODUCTION
World Health Organization defines natural menopause as the permanent cessation of menstruation resulting from the loss of ovarian follicular activity without an obvious intervening cause and is confirmed only after 12 consecutive months of amenorrhea¹. In Ayurvedic classics, it is mentioned that menstrual cycle permanently stops at the age of 50 years. The term ‘Rajonivritti’ is derived from Rajah + Nivritti meaning cessation of ArtavaPravritti. Artava i.e. menstrual blood along with stanya is mentioned as Updhatu of Rasa Dhatu.

RAJAH
The word Rajah is used synonymously for various substances (Amarkosha) like,
- Artava or Stripurushpa (Menstrual blood)-
- Ritumataapyudakyapa Syadrajah Pushpam Artavam².
• Raja Guna (A type of Manas Dosha)- Gunah Satttwam Rajastamah.3
• Parag (Pollen grains of flower)- Pushparasah Paragah Sumanorajah4.

Here, in the context of this subject, the meaning of Rajah like Artava and Stripushpa i.e. menstrual blood is taken into consideration.

Nirukti:
The substance, which stains the vagina or the Yoni, is termed as Rajah, since its purity and impurity is to be tested by means of the stained cloth (Amarkosha of Amarmishra with commentary Vyakhy Shuddha, page no. 210) it stains the cloth also and as such it is termed as Rajah. According to Acharya Sushruta, the menstrual blood, known as Rajas in the female, is derived from the same Rasa.5

Definition:
Only in female a substance produced from Rasa, having the colour of Rakta, flowing through the female genital tract, commencing at the age of 12 years, ceasing at the age of 50 years, except during pregnancy and lactation period and the duration of which is 3 to 7 days, is called Artava.6 As per Acharya Sushruta and Vagbhatt I & II, It is slightly blackish, without smell and flows out from the Apatya Marga of a woman by Vayu7,8,9

Formation of Raja (RajoUtpatti):
In classics Raja/Artava is said to be formed from Rasa or Rakta, it can be compared with 2 stages of its formation. The hormones of hypothalamus to pituitary then to ovary and ultimately to their target organ i.e. endometrium are carried through Rasa, the plasma, in this endometrium the blood is accumulated and then discharged during menstruation. This very process has been explained by Chakrapani with the words Avirbahva (formation) and Tirobhava (discharge) initially besides nourishment to endocrine glands as well as uterus and endometrium by rasa, the transportation of hormones to target organs through Rasa.10

Rajah / ArtavaUtpatti Hetu:
1. “Paripurnata of SharirikDhatus” by Acharya Bhela11
2. VayaParimana and Swabhavvash (natural) Dhatu Paripurnata have been accounted by Kashyapa.12

3. Kala, Swabhava, Yoni Abhirviddhi, and Vaya by Acharya Sushrutsrutha13
4. Upchaya RoopaVriddi by Acharya Bhavmishra14
5. Sodhana Prakriya by Dalahana (MalarupaArtava)15
6. Apana Vayu Kriya by Acharya Charaka16
7. Influence of Chandra and Mangal Grahas.17

NIVRITTI
Nirukti:
Word Nivritti is derived from Sanskrit Varnas ni and Vrit.

Synonyms of the word Nivritti like Apravritti, Uparma, Virati, Vyaparati, Uparati etc. Meaning of these all words can be summarized as below.

• Accomplishment, fulfillment
• Completion, end
• Discontinuance of the influence of one rule over another
• Resulting
• Ceasing, desisting, abstaining form
• Inactivity

Here, in the present context, the meaning of Nivritti is understood as end or cessation. Thus, the whole term Rajonivritti denotes a stopping point of a process or activity, means end of Artava Pravritti or cessation of menstruation.

Rajonivritti Kala - (Age of Menopause):
Rajonivritti Kala is mentioned by almost all the Acharyas without any controversy, few direct references are available regarding it. According to Sushruta Samhita18, Ashtanga Sangrah19, Ashtanga Hridaya20 and Bhavprakasha21, 50 years is mentioned as the age of Rajonivritti. Acharya Arundatta opines that the age mentioned above is a probable age and not a fixed one.

Nidana of Rajonivritti:
Some factors are mentioned by Acharyas in the context of "Rajah Utpatti Hetus". These factors can be considered as Rajah Nivritti Hetus also. Besides this, some very specific factors also can be considered as the causative factors for Rajonivritti as Kala, Swabhava, Vayu, Karma / environment, Dhatukshaya, Dosha-Dhatu-Mal, Abhighata, Ahara, Vihara, Mansikhetusec.
In Ayurveda, the "Vaya" is described on the basis of Kala. As this "Vaya Awastha" itself is manifested by the virtue of Kala. Acharya Charaka has beautifully explains that the same foetus after passing of sometime becomes child, young and old. Therefore, it is clear that after a specific time, the process of aging starts. Concentrating on "Rajonivritti", a specific Kala is mentioned. On the basis of Kala, female body manifests "Rajonivritti" at the age of 50 years.

(2) **Swabhava (Theory of Innate Destruction):**
Ayurveda has considered "Swabhava" as a causative factor in a generalized way. (e.g. in regard to Srusti Utpatti etc.) Rajah is also a physiological entity, which is having Swabhava of degradation and ultimately manifests in Rajonivritti.

(3) **Vayu:**
In human body, out of five types of Vayu, "Apana Vayu" and "VyanaVayu" are mainly responsible for the functions related to Artava. As Artava is related to "ArtavavahaSrotas", which comes under the field of Apana Vayu. Apana Vayu helps in all excretory activities like Mala, Mutra, Shukra, Artava and Garbhaniskramana, and also, helps to control these activities during the conditions of stress. So, it can be concluded that combined effect of these two Vayus are responsible for Rajah Utpatti as well as its cyclic expulsion at every month. So, it can be considered as a causative factor for Rajah Nivritti also. Vitiated Vata in the body affects strength, complexion, happiness and life span, affects all the sense organs, destroys, deforms or detains the embryo for long etc. Vitiated stage of Vayu in the body is very well understood in the case of Rajonivritti. Factors like Vata, Generalized Dhatukshaya, Generalized Rukshata and Shosha will lead to VataVridhhi. So, a vicious cycle will come into play and all the functions of Vata will be affected including Rajah Utpatti, which may be manifested as Rajah Nivritti. In this way Vayu is responsible for Rajonivritti.

(4) **Dhatukshaya:**
Dhatu Paripurnata is considered as a responsible factor for "Rajah Utpatti". For human being, reproduction is ultimate goal, in BalyaAvastha, this cannot be achieved because the status of Dhatus is immature, and therefore the Rajah is not manifested in Balya Avastha. But, in YuvaAvastha, Dhatus are in the state of maturation i.e. Sharirik Dhatu Paripurnata and the manifestation is Rajah Agman during this Avastha, which marks the starting of reproductive life for a woman. During jarapakwa avastha natural degeneration of body tissue causes loss of Artava also. The same thing is applied for Rajonivritti also, which manifests at JarapakwaAvastha.

(5) **Karma / Environment:**
Acharya Charak pointed out that the duration of lifespan of an individual depends on two factors i.e. Daiva, Karma of former life, Purshartha. (Karma of this life).

(6) **Abhigata:**
Acharya Sushruta has mentioned that the Viddhata of the ArtavavahaSrotus i.e. Garbhashaya and Aartava VahiniDhamanis will lead to Artavanasha. Viddhata may take place due to any direct or indirect trauma (Abhigata) to the ArtavavahaSrotas, which will directly lead to Artavanasha and will manifests as AkalajaRajonivritti.

(7) **Dosha-Dhatu-Mala:**
The factors which are responsible for the creation of body in their equilibrium state is also responsible for the disease in their un-equilibrium state. An individual is said to be healthy with uniform state of Agni, equilibrium state of Dosha, uniform state of essential Dhatu with the normal function and formation of Malayathu and intellence. The disturbance in these factors is responsible for the diseases. After 50 years of age there is imbalance in these factors and initiate the Rajonivritti.

(8) **AharatmakHetu**
**Based on the Rasa of the Ahara:**
- Amla Rasa
- Katu Rasa
- Lavana Rasa - provokes the Akalaja Rajonivritti.

**Excessive or single use of Lavana Rasa causes:**
Excessive or single use of Lavana Rasa causes: hair loss, whitening of hair, wrinkling of skin, fall of teeth, Impotency and Indriyanaash.

**Excessive or single use of Amlarasa causes**
Excessive or single use of Amlarasa causes Decomposition of muscles, cachexia, and weakness.

**Excessive or single use of Katruras causes**
tion, joint disease, fainting, giddiness, production of heat, thirst anorexia.32

**Based on ViruddhaAhara:**
- Rasa (taste) Viruddha,
- Guna (properties) Viruddha,
- Veerya (potency) Viruddha,
- Desha (place) Viruddha,
- Kala (time) Viruddha,
- Agni (digestive fire) Viruddha,
- Matra (amount) Viruddha,
- Satmya (wholesome) Viruddha,
- Sanskara (mode of preparation) Viruddha,
- Koshta (bowl) Viruddha,
- Awastha (stage of health) Viruddha,
- Karma (action) Viruddha,
- Parihaar Viruddha,
- Upchar (treatment) Viruddha.

9. ViharatmakHetu (Etiological factors related to physical behavior) - Viharatmak Hetus of Jara include Anshana, Pardara Abhigamana, DiwaswapnaNitya, Ayathabal Arambha, Ativyavaya and Vishama Vyayama. Karshya is responsible for early menopause. It may be either Anuloma or Pratiloma Kshaya. Shukra and Oja Dhatu provide potency to body and enhance immunity against diseases. Vyavaya performed in opposite to the law leads to Kshaya.35 Excessive work out aggravates Vata. Vata is the main Dosha which aggravates the symptoms of menopause.

10. Manasika Hetu (Etiological factors related to mental behavior) - BhayaBahulta, MohaBahulta, Krodhahahulta, ShokaBahulta, Mansa Pratikoolta, Lobha Bahulta are the reasons responsible for the senility. On long term basis these factors enhance Pitta and Vata Dosha which upset normal physiological pace in human being and are responsible in initiation of early senility. It is also a fact that Mansika and Sharirika diseases are closely linked to each other.34

**Types of Rajonivritti:** Ayurvedic science has divided the diseases into 4 major types.
- Agantuja, Sharira, Manasa and Swabhavika.35

**SwabhavikaVyadhi:**
Concentrating on 'Swabhavika' type; it is described that this type includes all those conditions, which are naturally occurring. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned a group of naturally occurring diseases includes Kshuda (Hunger), Pipasa (Thirst), Nidra (Sleep), Jara (Ageing) and Mrityu (Death). Although these are naturally occurring diseases, but sometimes they are being acquired also, which is described as Doshajaso, they are further divided into two types i.e. Kalaja and Akalaja.36

In the same manner, Rajonivritti too is a naturally occurring condition in every woman as that of Jaravastha etc. SwabhavikaVyadhis are considered as Yapya. So, Rajonivritti also can be divided into two types.1) Kalaja Rajonivritti 2) Akalaja Rajonivritti

1) **Kalaja Rajonivritti:**
If Rajonivritti occurs at its probable age (i.e. around 50 years of age) it is called as Kalaja Rajonivritti. Swabhavika Vyadhies are considered as Yapya. So, Rajonivritti is Yapya by Rasayana Chikitsa.

2) **Akalaja Rajonivritti:**
If Rajonivritti occurs before or after its probable age (i.e. around 50 years) it is termed as Akalaja Rajonivritti. Akalaja Rajonivritti takes place due to absence of the protective measurements of health care. In this type of Rajonivritti, symptoms are very acute and medical attention should be given to avoid its harmful effects.

According to Acharya Dalhana, they should be treated on the basis of Roga Swabhava due to pathology of Rajonivritti and on the basis of Dosha involved in it.37 This Akalaja Rajonivritti is more likely treatable than Kalaja Rajonivritti. This magnitude of Kalaja and Akalaja Rajonivritti is supposed to vary from person to person. This can be dependent on Prakriti as renowned by Acharya Charaka himself in Vimana Sthana chapter 8.

**Lakshanas of Rajonivritti:** Symptoms manifested by the patients of Rajonivritti can be grouped under following Ayurvedic parameters.
- A. Doshaja Lakshanas.
- B. Dhatukshayaja Lakshanas.
- C. Manasika Lakshanas.

(A) **Doshaja Lakshanas:**
According to available symptoms, differentiation can be done as VatajaLakshanas, PittajaLakshanas and Kaphaja Lakshanas.
Table 1: Doshaja Lakshanas

| Vataja Lakshana | • Shirah Shula (headache)  
|                 | • HridSpandanadhikya (palpitation)  
|                 | • Sandhi Vedana (joints pain)  
|                 | • Hasta-Pada Supti (numbness in upper and lower limbs)  
|                 | • ShabdaAsahinsuta (intolerance of sound)  
|                 | • Bhrama (unconsciousness)  
|                 | • Atopa (flatulence)  
|                 | • Vibandha (constipation)  
|                 | • Anidra / Alpanidra (insomnia)  
|                 | • Katishula (lower backache)  
|                 | • BalaKshaya (loss of strength)  

| Pittaja Lakshana | • Ushnaamubhuti (hot feeling/hot flushes)  
|                 | • Daha (burning)  
|                 | • Yonidaha (vaginitis)  
|                 | • SwedaAdhikyata (excessive sweating)  
|                 | • Ratriswedha (night sweats)  
|                 | • Trisha (excessive thirst)  
|                 | • Mutradaha (burning micturition)  
|                 | • Glani (exhaustion—even without any work)  

| Kaphaja Lakshana | • Angamarda (bodyache)  
|                 | • Bhrama (unconsciousness)  
|                 | • Raukshaya (dryness all over body)  

(B) Dhatukshayaja Lakshanas:

Symptoms of Dhatukshaya observed in the patients of Rajonivritri, can be grouped according to the individual Dhatukshayaja Lakshanas as follows.

Table 2: Dhatukshayaja Lakshanas

| RasaKshayajanya Lakshan | • Shabdasahatva (intolerance to loud sounds)  
|                         | • Hriddravatva (chest pain)  
|                         | • Shula (pain)  
|                         | • Shosha (emaciation)  
|                         | • Trisha (thirst)  

| RaktaKshayajanya Lakshan | • TwakaRukshata (dryness in skin)  
|                          | • Sira Shaithilya (dilated veins)  

| MansKshayajanya Lakshan | • Shushkata (thin)  
|                         | • Toda (pain)  
|                         | • Rukshata (dryness)  
|                         | • Glani (exhaustion—even without any work)  
|                         | • Sandhi Sphutana (creps in joints)  
|                         | • Sandhi Vedana (joint pain)  
|                         | • DhamaniShaithilya (dilated arteries)  

| Meda Kshayajanya Lakshan | • AngaRukshata i.e. vaginal dryness)  
|                         | • Shosha (emaciation)  
|                         | • Krushata (thin)  

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**Asthi Kshayajanya Lakshan**
- Asthitoda (bones pain)
- Danta-Nakha-Kesha- Roma (Rukshata / Shatana (dryness/falling of teeth, nails, hairs etc)
- Sandhi-shaithilya (laxity in joints)

**Majja Kshayajanya Lakshan**
- Asthisauhira (fragile bones)
- AsthiToda (bones pain)
- Daurbalya (weakness)
- Bhrama (unconsciousness)
- Tamo Darshana (darkness in front of eyes)

**Shukra Kshayajanya Lakshan**
- Yoni Vedana (vulval pain)
- Daurbalya (weakness)
- Panduta (anemic)

(C) Manasika Lakshanas:
Following Mansika lakshanas are not less important, they vitiates by manovahasrotas.
Krodha (anger), Shoka (sorrow), Bhaya (fear), Dwesha (hate), Smriti Hras (memory loss), UtsahaHani (loss of excitement), Dairyra Hani (impotence), Shirah Shula (headache), Vishada (sadness), Chinta anxiety, Medhahras (loss of intelligence), AlpaHarsha. These symptoms are very troublesome to the patients as well as for physician. Sometimes that concerned the whole family happiness of the patients. So, it is very necessary to delight these symptoms with proper medical help as well as counseling and family support too.

Sadhya Asadhyata: Rajonivritti is a Swabhavika Vyadhi as that of Jara. Acharya Charaka considered them as, “Swabhavo Nishpratikriyata” i.e. by nature they are incurable or having no treatment. Acharya Chakrapani while commenting on this verse, mentions that the word "Nishpratikriya" means ordinary treatment and measures have no effect on Rajonivritti but it is "Yapya" by Rasayana treatment. Acharya Dalhana also comments that there is no treatment for Kalakrita. They may be made "Yapya" by Rasayana, dietetics etc.

DISCUSSION

Rajah is a very important physiological entity. Shuddha Rajah or Artava is a sign of Dhatuparipurnata, and it marks the starting of reproductive life of a female. Utpatti of Rajah can be understood according to KedariKulyaNyaya, Khale Kapot Nyayaas Upadhatu of Rasa. Vitiation of Doshas and Dhatus is due to 4 important causes, those are casual cause (Agantuj), physical (Sharirika), mental (Mansika) and natural cause (Swabhavaja). In Ayurveda, Rajonivritti is a naturally occurring condition of every woman observed at the later stage of life when the body is fully in grip of senility. Here, a question arise that why Rajonivritti as a diseased condition, not described in the classics, because in ancient time, the way of living was totally different. Females had organic source of fruits, Vegetables and original source of milk and its products like Ghrita, Navneet, Kheer etc, Dinacharya, Ritucharya as well as Rajaswalacharya followed thus Rajonivritti Awasthajanya Lakshanas were very less. Almost all the Acharyas of BrihatTrayi and LaghuTrayi and others have described the age of Rajonivritti as approximately 50 years without any controversy, which is also true in the current era. The reason may be the Rajah is a Updhatu of Rasa Dhatu and the function of all Dhatus is better in Yuvavastha, which reduces during the Praudha Awastha. Acharya Charaka and Sushruta mentioned the effect of ageing on Dhatus as “Hiyamana” or “Kshiyamana” which means there is decrease in the quality and quantity of the Dhatus so the Kshiyamanao if the Rasa Dhatu ultimately Hras of the Updhatu i.e. Artava and resulting into Rajonivritti. The majority of the Lakshanas of Rajonivritti are due to VataVriddi, Kapha Kshaya, Ashaya Apakarsha of Pitta by aggravated Vata; vitiation of ManovahaSrotas; and Dhatukshaya, which all are manifesting as a part of aging.
CONCLUSION
As Rajonivritti is a naturally occurring condition in female body; it can be categorized under Nispratyanik or Swabhavikavyadhish as that of Jara (aging) described in the classics. The various symptoms of Jaravastha are more likely observed in Rajonivritti, Janya Avastha also. So, it can be stated that Rajonivritti is one of the part of the process of aging, specific to female and that's why it is a "Yapya condition" by diet and Rasayanae. Jaravastha synergistically lead to particular Rasa-Rakta Dhatuksaya and especially Upadhatu Artavakshaya. In addition, due to generalized Raukshya, Shosha and Rukshata take place at Artavavaha Srotas, and all this changes ultimately result into Artavanasha, which manifest as Rajonivritti.

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