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## Ayurveda and Modern Perspective on *Rajonivritti* w.s.r. to Menopause: Review Based on Literary Study

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### ABSTRACT:

Menopause, a phenomenon unique to women, is the ending of a woman's monthly menstrual period and ovulation. It, alongside, several other changes in the body and mind, brought in due to a decline in the amount of the hormones estrogen and progesterone being produced by the body. Menopause is, occasionally, viewed as an end to youth and sexuality, making it a socially unacceptable occurrence. Menopause, though, one of the important physical and mental milestones in a woman's life, many women lack information about what is taking place and what are their options. There comes the role of Ayurveda , in Ayurveda literature there is no detailed description of *Rajonivritti* or menopause except the age of *Rajonivritti* is given as 50 years. Ayurveda involves a holistic physiological system based on balance, with its cardinal doctrine of human physiology being constituted by “*vata*”, “*pitta*” and “*kapha*”. In modern medicine the only treatment for these symptoms is Hormone replacement therapy (HRT), which is not a long-term therapy to be given as it has side effects on the overall health of the women. In Ayurveda *Dhatu kshaya* can be treated with *Rasayana* therapy and other symptoms of hypo-estrogenic conditions can be treated with Phytoestrogens. So, Ayurveda gives a non-hormonal and cost-effective treatment for *Rajonivritti* or Menopause.

**Key Words** – Menopause, *Rajonivritti*, HRT, *Rasayana* therapy.

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Nirukti*

The word menopause comes from the Greek words “*menos*” meaning month and pause meaning “to cease”. So, menopause means the “monthly stops” According of Ayurveda, *Rajnoviritti* is “*rajah + nivriti*”, where “*rajah*” means *Artava* i.e menstrual blood and “*nivriti*” means cessation.

#### Reference in ayurvedic text

In Ayurveda Samhita description of *Rajonivritti* or Menopause is given and the age of *Rajonivritti* is mentioned by *Acharaya Sushruta* as 50 years.<sup>[1]</sup>

According to *acharya sushruta*, menstrual cycle starts at the age of 12 years and cease by the age of 50 years because of ageing phenomenon.

Acharya Arundatta opines that the age mentioned above is a probable age not fixed one, there may be some variation in this regard.<sup>[2]</sup>



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### **Nidana**

As *Rajonivritti* is not described in the ayurveda classics as a separate disease. There is no detailed information available regarding its *Nidana*, *Purvarupa*, *Rupa*, *Samprapti* etc. So, to understand this condition as a disease, certain basic principles of ayurveda have to be considered. Concentrating on the probable *Nidanas* (etiological factors) regarding the condition *Rajonivritti*, few factors can be squeezed out. Some of these factors are mentioned by Acharyas in the context of "*Rajah utpatti hetus*", too. These factors can be considered as *Rajah nivritti hetus* also.

#### **Causes of Rajonivritti can be -**

-Kala – Vata

- Karma – Abhighata

- Swabhava- Dhatu kshaya

*Rajonivritti* also can be divided into two types –

1. *Kalaja Rajonivritti*

2. *Akalaja Rajonivritti*

*Nidana* of *akalaja rajonivritti* are other than the normal causes mentioned above and they can be ; excessive exercise, fasting, *chinta*, *ruksha* (without oil-ghee) little and permissive food, consumption of strong wind and sunlight, fear, mourning, *ruksha madyapana*, night awakening etc.<sup>[3]</sup>

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This section includes a chapter dealing with prevention and management of menopausal syndrome in Ayurveda, as well as references to several Ayurvedic classical works, research articles, and journals.

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

1. To Conduct a comprehensive assessment of Ayurvedic and modern literature on menopause.
2. To find out a better alternative of hormone replacement therapy in treating menopause symptoms, according to Ayurveda with Ayurveda herbs and therapies.

#### **Samprapti**

According to *Ayurveda Samhita's Rajonivritti* is not a disease it is *Jarajanay vikara* that means age generated phenomenon in women by the age of 50 years. So, *rajonivritti* or menopause can be considered as *swabhavika vyadhi* as are *jara(aging)*, *kshudha(hunger)*, *pipasa(thirst)*, *nidra(sleep)*, *mritayu(death)* described in *samhitas*. For understanding the reason behind *rajonivritti* and what happens because of ageing we have to understand the basic principles of Ayurveda i.e *dosha-stithi* according to different *avastha* or *kala* .

In *Balya avastha* there is dominance of *Kapha dosha*.

In *Yuva avastha* there is dominance of *Pitta dosha*.

In *Praudha avastha* there is dominance of *Vata dosha*.

*Samprapti* for *Rajonivritti* can be constructed on the basis of *swabhavika vyadhi*. Considering, *Kala*, *Vayu*, *Swabhava* and *Jaravastha* as Biological Stimulants, which are common for both *Jara* and *Rajonivritti*. These factors will be responsible for generalized *dhatukshayka* and vice versa to generalised *vataviddhi* and *kaphakshaya*. Both these condition together, will produce particular *Rasa-Raktadhatukshaya*. The main nourishing *Rasadhatu* will be decreased both qualitatively and quantitatively and ultimately resulting in its *upadhatu Artavakshaya*. Due to this factor along with generalized *vataviddhi* (increased *Laghu*, *Rksha*, *Khara Guna*) and *kaphakshaya* (decreased *Gura*, *Snigdha*, *Drava Guna*); *Rukshata* And *Shosha* Of *Artavavaha Srotasa* take place and all these things will lead to *Artavanash* and manifest as *Rajonivritti*.

#### **Modern perspective -**

Menopause is not a disease but a natural aging phenomenon and many women lack information about what is taking place & what are their options regarding a proper diet, nutritional supplements & exercise and simple knowledge & preparation that can enable one to embrace it and move on with grace.

The clinical diagnosis is confirmed following stoppage of menstruation for twelve consecutive months without any other pathology.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### **Endocrinology of menopausal transition -**

Few years prior to menopause, along with depletion of the ovarian follicles, the follicles become resistant to pituitary gonadotropins. As a result, there is a significant diminished estradiol production. This decreases the negative feedback effect on hypothalamus-pituitary axis resulting in increase in FSH (Follicle stimulating hormone). The increase in FSH is also due to diminished inhibin. Level of LH (Luteinizing hormone) increases and AMH (Anti-Mullerian hormone) decreases. Due to shortening of follicular phase of the cycle, mean cycle length is shorter. Luteal phase remains constant. there is accelerated rate of follicular depletion so that there are no more follicles available and even if some exist, they are resistant to gonadotropins.

#### **Organ changes in menopause –**

Ovaries shrink in size, wrinkled and white. Fallopian tubes show atrophy, cilia disappear. Uterus becomes smaller, endometrium become thin and atrophic, cervical secretion becomes scanty. Vagina becomes narrow due to loss of elasticity, vaginal pH becomes alkaline due to absence of glycogen and *doderlein's bacillus*. Breast fat is reabsorbed and become flat. Bladder and urethra epithelium becomes

thin and prone to infections.

**Visible symptoms :**

1. Hot flashes, headache
2. Weight gain
3. depression, fatigue, insomnia,
4. Mood swings, palpitations
5. dementia, anxiety
6. Dyspareunia, low libido, vaginal dryness
7. UTI, urine incontinence
8. Joint pain

In Ayurveda we can divide these symptoms according to *dosha* that is *vata*, *pitta*, *kapha* .

- *Vata dosha* symptoms include anxiety, nervousness, dyspareunia, vaginal dryness, loss of muscle tone, irregular menses, disturbed sleep, bloating and joint pain.
- *Pitta dosha* symptoms include hot temper, anger, irritability, hot flashes, skin rashes, excessive bleeding, UTI.
- *Kapha dosha* symptoms include weight gain, lethargy.

**Complications –**

Post-menopausal women run a high risk for fracture of bones due to Osteoporosis and Cardiovascular disease due to deficiency of Estrogen. Estrogen prevents osteoclastic activity and increases absorption of calcium from the gut to prevent osteoporosis. Estrogen increases high density lipoprotein and decreases low density lipoprotein and total cholesterol. Estrogen prevents atherosclerosis by antioxidant property.

**Treatment**

**General treatment –**

Counselling plays the most important role in management of menopausal symptoms therefore every woman with menopausal symptoms should be counselled about the physiological and psychological changes. This will clear her mind and will remove her fears and minimize some of the symptoms like anxiety, depression, and disturbed sleep.

- Lifestyle modification- this includes regular physical activities like morning walk and *Yogasana*, reducing high caffeine intake (tea/coffee), stop smoking and alcohol consumption, increasing calcium intake.

- Nutritious diet is recommended.
- Soy protein is found to be effective in reducing vasomotor symptoms.
- Vitamin E reduces hot flash.
- Calcium sources for decreasing BMD (bone mineral density).

**Principal of treatment in Ayurveda –**

- In modern medicine the only treatment for these symptoms is Hormone replacement therapy, which is not a long-term therapy to be given as it have side effects on the overall health of the women. In Ayurveda *Dhatu kshaya* can be treated with *Rasayana* therapy and other symptoms of hypo-estrogenic conditions can be treated with Phytoestrogens. Phytoestrogens have both estrogenic and anti-estrogenic property and action, depending on the target tissue.<sup>[5]</sup> Phytoestrogens exert their effect in a selective estrogen receptor modulator (SERM), through this they affect the endogenous production of estrogen. Other than this we can use drugs with *Madhura rasa*, *Madhura vipaka* and *sheet veerya* are used, they will pacify *vata* and *pitta doshas* . Medicated oil can also be used for local application. <sup>[6]</sup>

**Specific treatment –**

1. *Yashtimadhu* ,*Brahmi* – *Medhya rasayana* and are useful for memory boosting and improving neural functioning .
2. *Aamlaki churna* – act as *rasayana*.
3. *Ashwagandha churna ksheerpaka*, *Shatavari churna ksheerpaka*, *Arjuna twak churna ksheerpaka* – *rasayana therapy*.
4. *Ashwagandha*, *Arjuna*, cardamom, aloe vera, *Shatavari*, saffron, sandalwood - *vatahara* and *pittahara* herbs.
5. *Sarwang abhyanga* ,*shiro dhara*, *shiro vasti*,*shiro pichu* for hot flash and other psychological symptoms.
6. *Madhuyashti* or *shatpushpa tail*<sup>[7]</sup> *yonipichu* for dyspareunia.
7. *Shankha Bhasma*, *Praval Bhasma*, *Kapardika Bhasma*,*Ashwagandha* preparations - for falling Bone Mineral Density (BMD) as they contain calcium .

8. *Lashuna* or Garlic based preparations, *Navak Gugglu*, *Shunthi churna*, *Triphala guggul*, etc is also useful.<sup>[8]</sup> These dug not only help in shedding weight but also reduce harmful lipids in blood which usually rise after menopause.

#### **Pathya – Apathya**

##### **Pathya –**

1. Introduce a *vata-pitta* pacifying diet, that is warm, fresh, nicely cooked food.
2. take regular meals on time
3. consume green leafy vegetables and legumes.
4. Avoid high sugar containing food items.
5. Avoid sour and spicy food items.
6. early bedtime and get up early.
7. oil massage (*abhyanga*) using almond and olive oil and nasal medication (*nasya*).
8. drink coconut water.
9. regular practice of *yoga* and *pranayama*, like *supta baddha konasana*, *setu bandhasana*, *marjaryasana*, *seetkari pranayama*, *bhramari pranayama*, *anuloma-viloma*.
10. regular morning walk (at least 30 minutes).

##### **Apathya -**

1. caffeine and other stimulants
2. refined sugar cold drinks.
3. hot spicy foods, hot drinks, and alcohol
4. eating late at night.

## **DISCUSSION**

*Rajonivritti* is not considered to be an illness in Ayurveda. It is thought to be a natural occurrence in every woman who reaches the end of her reproductive life. Almost all Acharyas, without exception, have portrayed *Rajonivritti* as being around 50 years old. Even in today's world, the average age of menopause is 50. The cause of *Rajonivritti* at this stage of life is simply a decrease in the amount of *Rasa Dhatu* available for the sustenance of its *Updhatu*, or by-product, which in females is *Raja*. *Raja* is a by product

of *Rasadhatu*, whose function is better in *Taruna Avastha* (*i.e. Yuvavastha*) but diminishes in *Praudha Avastha* (Late Adulthood), eventually leading to *Rajonivritti* (menopause) when a woman reaches the age of senescence. . Because *Rajonivritti* is a normal occurrence in the female body, it can be classified as part of the *Swabhavika Vyadhis*, which include *Jara* (ageing), *Kshudha* (hunger), *Pipasa* (thirst), *Nidra* (sleep), and *Mrityu* (death) as stated in the *Vedas*. *Rajonivritti-janya avastha* has many of the same symptoms as *Jaravastha* in its early stages. As a result, "*Gatartava*" or "*Nishphala*" is one of the synonyms for "Old woman." As a result, *Rajonivritti* can be inferred to be a portion of the ageing process unique to females, and it denotes the onset of geriatric age in women. The *Swabhavika Vyadhis* are divided into two categories: *Kalaja* and *Akalaja*. *Rajonivritti* is a naturally occurring condition that can be divided into two types: *Kalaja rajonivritti* (Menopause) and *Akalaja rajonivritti* (Menopause).

The majority of *Rajonivritti's* *Lakshanas* are caused by *Vata Vriddhi*, *Kapha Kshaya*, and *Ashayapakarsha of Pitta* caused by aggravated *Vata*. *Rajonivritti* is also linked to the vitiation of *Manovaha srotas* and *Dhatukshaya*, all of which indicate the onset of old age. Ayurveda has been shown to be effective in the management and prevention of chronic illnesses. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is more commonly used in modern medicine, although it has major side effects such as an increased risk of reproductive cancers and metabolic problems. This is why it's so important to comprehend menopause conceptually through Ayurveda and come up with safe therapies to prevent morbid symptomatology during this stage. The current study is a genuine attempt to discover an efficient complementary therapy regimen.

### **Modern Concept**

Menopause is a natural biological process that each woman goes through on her own. Menopausal syndrome is caused by the ovaries' ability to generate oestrogen and progesterone gradually declining, as a result of which the pituitary gland becomes more active (positive feedback) and produces more FSH and LH, resulting in various physical and psychological disorders. Apart from some atrophic alterations in the body, many symptoms of various types, such as Vasomotor, Genitourinary, Gastrointestinal, Locomotor, Psychosexual, and so on. Hormonal imbalance and ageing are to blame for the majority of them. Psychological changes and symptoms vary widely and are mostly determined by an individual's genetic makeup as well as a woman's past attitude toward menopause and its

significance, rather than oestrogen insufficiency.

## CONCLUSION

In Ayurveda , *Rajonivritti* is considered as a natural phenomenon in women's happening at the end of reproductive life and at the age of 50 years .Menopausal transition and menopause cause imbalance of hormones in the body which further leads to various symptoms that affects the woman's day to day life. So, to maintain this imbalance of hormones ,doshas and rasa dhatu *kshaya* a proper balanced diet with regular exercise and *yogasana* is advised. Ayurveda gives a better approach at understanding *rajonivritti* along with number of herbal medicines and therapies which are effective with no side effects .

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