

**Review Article****A REVIEW: SHED LIGHT ON AYURVEDIC DESCRIPTION OF MENOPAUSE****Kshama Kulkarni^{1*}, Rakesh Mishra², I.B. Kotturshetti³**

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ABSTRACT

Menarche and Menopause are the two important landmarks of reproductive life cycle of woman's life. Menopause is the most significant event that brings physical and mental transformation in the body. It is a natural phenomenon occurs at the age 45-55 years. This phase is associated with manifestation of aging process along with other symptoms such as irregular menstruation, hot flashes, vaginal dryness, urinary problems, changes in appearance, GIT related problems, mood swings, sleep disturbances, palpitations, changes in sexual desire, osteoporosis, heart disease. The group of signs and symptoms associated with the menopausal phase are termed as menopausal syndrome. In Ayurvedic classics, Menopause is the termed as '*Rajonivrutti*' and menopausal syndrome as '*Rajonivrutti anubandhaja vyadhies*'. *Acharyas* described as it is normal physiological state. In Ayurveda, Menopausal symptoms are regarded as imbalance of the *Tridosha*, *Dhatukshaya* and disturbance in *Agni* which occurs naturally as consequence of aging process. Modern medicine treat this condition with Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) which results in various complications, but it is effective therapy for a short term use. Considering the limitations of treatment with modern medicine, Ayurveda provides excellent solution & effective medicament for transition period i.e. menopause. Ayurvedic treatment for menopause involves correcting hormonal imbalance with proper diet, lifestyle modification, *Shamana, Shodhan chikitsa, Rasayan* therapy.

INTRODUCTION

Since ancient period woman has never been independent. But today, in the era of information and technology, the complete scenario has been changed. Women have a multidimensional attitude and occupied special place in the society by reaching all kinds of heights by their spectacular performance in almost all possible fields. Hence each and every phase of a women's life is beautiful and gracious. The phases of 'menarche' and 'menopause' have important influences on the physical, psychological, social, and emotional aspects of a woman.

Etymologically, origin of the word menopause lies in the Greek words 'meno' (menses/month) and 'pause' (stop/cease). Menopause is a permanent cessation of menstruation that occurs at mean age of 51 years.^[1] Cessation of menstrual cycles and end of reproductive phase of life are not the only just highlights of menopause but has strong influence on women's health of lifetime and bringing tremendous changes in lifestyle. A woman spends almost a one third of her life in this phase.^[2] This phase also shows the end of natural fertility period in a woman. The group of signs and symptoms associated with the menopausal phase are termed as 'menopausal syndrome'. Menopause tends to occur over a period of years and it is natural consequence of aging.^[3] Quality of life includes physical, functional, emotional, social and cognitive variables up to 85% of menopausal women.^[4] In Ayurveda, this phenomenon considered in a different way and termed as '*Rajonivrutti*' means end of *Artava Pravritti*

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or cessation of menstruation. *Rajonivritti* is not described separately as a pathological condition, but as normal physiological state. In Ayurveda, Menopause deals with '*Jara Pakva Avastha*'^[5] of body. *Jara* and *Rajonivritti* are manifested due to progressive reduction in the functional ability of *Agni's*, which results into an inadequate tissue nutrition. This imbalance in nutritional status causes the irreversible degenerative changes in '*Sapta dhatus*'.

Being an alarming problem, menopause needs an effective and safe treatment. In contemporary science, Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is one and only alternative for these 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.^[6,7,8,9] At this stage there are variations in psychological aspects and this hormonal therapy is not much effective. Contemporary medicine manage them by the long term use of sedative, hypnotics and anxiolytic drugs, and may lead to various side effects like drowsiness, impaired motor function, loss of memory, allergic reactions, non-social behaviours, drug dependence etc. Therefore, Ayurveda finds out a safe and effective management of menopausal syndrome without creating any adverse effect. As a result, treatment of this transitional phase has now gained more importance than ever before.

Rajonivritti Kala

According to Acharya *Sushruta*^[10] and various other references too^[11,12] 50 years is mentioned as the age of *Rajonivritti*, when the body is fully in grip of senility.^[13] Acharya *Arundatta* opines that the age mentioned as 50yrs is probable age and not a fixed one. There may be some variations in this regard^[14]. Ayurveda has given more importance to *Ahara* and *Vihara* to maintain health and these factors should be considered for this fluctuation.

Nidana

In classics, *Rajonivritti* is not described as a separate disease, few scattered references are available. Concentrating on the probable *Nidana*, few factors can be considered. Some of the factors are mentioned by *Acharyas* as "*Rajah Utpatti hetus*". These factors can also be considered as '*Rajah Nivritti hetus*'. Some of specific factors are often considered as the causative factors for *Rajonivritti*, are as follows.^[15]

1. *Swabhava*
2. *Jarapakvasharira* due to *Kala*
3. *Dhatukshaya*

4. Effect of *Dosha*
5. *Vayu*
6. *Abhighata*
7. *Karma* or environment
8. *Rajastrava*

Types

Ayurveda has divided all diseases into 4 major types *Agantuja*, *Sharira*, *Manas* and *Swabhavika*.^[16] Concentrating on '*Swabhavika*' type it includes all those conditions, which are naturally occurring. *Acharya Sushruta* has considered naturally occurring diseases under the heading of '*Swabhava balapravritta*'

Includes.^[17]

- *Kshudha* (hunger)
- *Pipasa* (thirst)
- *Nidra* (sleep)
- *Jara* (aging)
- *Mrityu* (death)

Although these disease are naturally occurring diseases, but sometimes they are being acquired too and described as "*Doshaja*" they are further divided into two types- *Kalakrita* and *Akalakrita*. In the some way, *Rajonivritti* too is a naturally occurring condition in every woman as that of *Jaravastha* etc.

1) *Kalaja Rajonivritti*

2) *Akalaja Rajonivritti*

Kalaja Rajonivritti

If *Rajonivritti* occurs at its probable age, it is called as *Kalaja Rajonivritti*. According to *Acharya Sushruta*^[18] the timely *Rajonivritti* (Natural diseases like aging) occurs only when the protective measurements of healthcare are being practiced. This condition is *Yapya* by *Rasayana*.

Akalaja Rajonivritti

If *Rajonivritti* occurs before or after its probable age, it is termed as *Akalaja Rajonivritti*. It takes place due to absence of the protective measurements of health care. *Acharya Dalhana*, mentioned as, it should be treated on the basis nature of *Roga* (illness) and *Dosha* involved in it. Thereby, *Akalaja Rajonivritti* is easily treatable when compared to *Kalaja Rajonivritti*.

Acharya Charaka mentioned in *Viman Sthana* as, this state of *Kalaja* and *Akalaja Rajonivritti* differs from person to person on the basis of *Prakriti*.

Samprapti

Acharya Sushruta has explained that there is *Shareera-shithiltain* in *Vrudha-avastha* (old age) and women attain *Rajonivritti* stage at around 50 years. This age is dominated by *Vata dosa*, this dominant *Vata dosha* affects the female body. *Laghu* and *Ruksha guna* of the predominant *Vata* causes reduction in

Dravata of Rasa dhatu. Thus Rasa dhatu gets decreased both qualitatively and quantitatively and there by resulting in Dhatukshaya, starting from Rasa- Raktadi dhatu, further respective Updhatu kshaya takes place. There is no further Dhatu production and along with Dhatu and Updhatu kshaya causes Artava nasha. The vitiated Vata dosha also disturbs Manas dosha (Raja and Tama dosha) leading to various psychological disturbances.

Rajonivirutti Anubandh Lakshana^[19]

As per Ayurveda there is no specific description in regard with clinical features of Rajonivrutti. Ayurveda consider Rajonivrutti as natural physiology occurring in body. With aging, among three Dosha Vayu increase causing decline in Pitta and Kapha followed by decline in all the Saptadhatus starting from Rasa to Sukra and also of Ojas. All the symptoms of menopausal syndrome are considered under Jaravyadhi. Therefore, Lakshana of Dhatukshaya and predominance of Vatapitta are commonly observed along with few Manasik lakshana.

Table 1: Doshaja Lakshanas

Vata Lakshanas	Pitta Lakshanas	Kapha Lakshanas
Shirahshoola	Ushnaanubhuti	Ati sthaulaya
Hrid Spandana	Daha	Yoni kandu
Hasta Pada Supti	Svedaadhikyata	Yoni srava
Shabda Asahishnuta	Mutradaha	
Bala- Kshaya	Yonidaha	
Anidra/Alpanidra	Santapa	
Smritimandhya	Murcha	

Table 2: Dhatukshayaja Lakshanas

Rasa Kshaya	Rakta Kshaya	Mamsa Kshaya	Meda Kshaya	Asthi Kshaya	Majja Kshaya	Shukra Kshaya
Shabdasahtatva	Twakarukshata	Sphik- Gandadi	Anga Rukshata	Asthitoda	Asthi Saushirya	Yoni vedana
Hriddravatva	Sira shaithilya	Toda	Shrama	Danta, Nakha, Kेशha, Roma, Rukshata	Asthitoda	Shrama
Shula		Rukshata	Shosha	Sandhi-shaithilya	Daurbalya	Daurbalya
Shrama		Glani	Krusata		Brahma	Panduta
Shosha		Sandhi Vedana			Tamo darshan	
Trishna		Dhamani shaithilya				

Manasika Lakshanas

By the Ayurvedic point of view, psychological symptoms also commonly observed due to vitiation of Manovahasrotas. Lakshanas as follows:

- Krodha
- Bhaya
- Smriti Hras
- Dairya Hani
- Vishada
- Medhahras
- Shoka
- Dwesha
- Utsaha Hani
- Shirah Shula
- Chinta
- Alpa Harsha and Priti.

Modern View

Menopause is generally defined as permanent cessation of ovarian function and follicular activity resulting in permanent amenorrhoea. The clinical diagnosis is confirmed following stoppage of menstruation for twelve (or six) consecutive months, for which, there is no other obvious pathological or

physiological cause. As such, a woman is declared to have attained menopause. Menopause is generally occurring between ages of 40-55 years of average is 50 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 cycle. There by graffian follicle formation also stops, estrogen activity and finally atrophy of endometrium leads to amenorrhoea. Hence results in fall of estrogen level, there is rebound increase of FSH and LH by ant pituitary gland. Later graffian follicle formation also stops

estrogen activity and atrophy of endometrium leads to amenorrhoea. Therefore, there is a fall in estrogen level and rebound increase in FSH and LH by anterior pituitary gland.^[20]

Causes of Menopause

- Genetically:** Menopause is because by the nature declining function of the ovaries. And gradually produces lower levels of hormones oestrogen, progesterone, and testosterone.
- Surgery:** Surgical menopause is a result of a hysterectomy, oophorectomy and other pelvic surgeries. Ablations, procedures to remove the lining of the uterus, can exhibit menopause by stopping menstrual periods.
- Medical menopause:** may occur after medical treatments such as chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and during the course of various drug regimens.^[21]

Menopausal Symptoms

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Palpitations
- Insomnia
- Mood changes
- Vaginal dryness
- Osteoporosis
- Urinary incontinence

Diagnosis

A diagnosis of menopause is usually made based on age, history of menstrual periods, symptoms and the results of a pelvic exam. Additional exams and tests may be needed if symptoms are severe, other conditions are suspected and other concerns make diagnosis difficult.^[22]

1. Clinical criteria:

- During climacteric period, cessation of menstruation for consecutive 12 month.
- Appearance of menopausal symptoms “hot flush” and “night sweat” etc.

2. Vaginal cytology

- Showing Maturation Index of atleast 10/85/5 [Feature of low oestrogen]

3. Hormonal assessment

- Serum estradiol is < 20pg/ml
- Serum FSH & LH is > 40ml U/ ml (three value at weeks interval required).^[23]

Sadhyasadhya

Acharya Charaka considered them as, incurable by nature or having no treatment.^[24] *Acharya Chakrapani* commented “*Nisha Pratikriya*” means ordinary treatment and measures have no effect on aging (*Rajonivritti*) but it is “*Yapya*” by *Rasayana chikitsa*. *Acharya Dalhana* also commented that there does not exist any treatment to *Kalakrita*. They may be made “*Yapya*” by *Rasayana*, dietetics etc. ‘*Yapya*’ is partial amenability of disease to treatments, because it is said that in “*Yapya*” stage, the *Vyadhi* recurs immediately after the treatment is withdrawn.

Ayurvedic Way of Management

The basic concept of Ayurveda *Chikitsa* is “*Swasthsya swasthyarakshanam and Aturasyavikara prasamanamcha*” prevention is better than cure. As such no treatment of *Rajonivritti* has been given anywhere in Ayurvedic classics, being a *Swabhavaja* state of life. But on the basis of etiopathology and *Lakshanas* of *Dhatukshayajanya Vata-Pitta Prakopa* treatment can be given as per the fundamental of Ayurveda as time to time *Samashodhana*,^[25] *Rasayana*^[26,27] therapy and *Satvavaja chikitsa*. Along with this one should follow the *Doshaic* diet and specific lifestyle, regular consumption of Ayurvedic herbs.

The type of treatment depends upon the *Dosha* in which woman’s menopause symptoms are manifesting.

Table 3: Ahara and Vihar as Per Doshas

	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Diet	More intakes of warm food and drinks. Regular meals and use of spices, fennel and cumin. Reduce caffeine and other stimulants, refined sugar, cold drinks. Avoid hot spicy foods, hot drinks and alcohol, avoiding late dinner	Preferably cooling foods, water intake, fruits (grapes pears, plums, mango, melons and apples), yellow squash cucumber, and organic foods. Avoid hot spicy food, hot drinks and alcohol, no eating late at night.	Prefer light, dry and warm food, consume fruits, whole grown vegetables, use spices such as black pepper, turmeric & ginger. Avoid- meat, cheese, sugar, cold foods & drinks.
Life style	Early bed-time, oil massage, using almond and olive oil, meditation, <i>yoga</i> , regular exercise like walking	Bed time at 10 pm, oil massage using coconut and sesame oil, use meditation & other techniques to reduce anger. Exercise & exposure to sun are limited.	Early wake up (6am), Mustard oil recommended for massage.
Herbs	<i>Ashwagandha</i> , <i>Arjun</i> , Cardamom,	<i>Aloe vera</i> , <i>Arjuna</i> , Saffron,	Bay berry, <i>Guggulu</i> ,

	<i>Guggul, Sandalwood</i>	Sandalwood, <i>Shatavari</i> .	Mustard.
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1. **Shaman chikitsa-** *Agnideepana, Amapachana, Anulomana, Balya.*

2. **Shodhana chikitsa:** *Panchakarma chikitsa* are therapies that thoroughly cleanse and purify the physical and mental impurities from the body and mind. Serious symptoms like frequent hot flashes, and moderate to severe mood swings, are signs of deeper imbalances of *Doshas*. Ayurveda describes that '*Aama*' results in these stubborn symptoms. To eliminate these toxins *Panchakarma* therapy is adopted.

3. **Rasayana chikitsa**

Menopause symptoms are Nature's awaken call to paying more sincere attention to one's health. Acharya *Sushruta* described ageing and diseases as the cause for the menopause. In *Jararoga Chikitsasutra*, *Rasayana* therapy is the only way to overcome symptoms related to *Jara*. By definition *Rasayana*, the term *Rasayana* refers to obtaining the optimum nourishment to the *Rasadi sapta dhatus*. Hence, the *Rasayana* may be specialized sort of treatment influencing the *Dhatus, Agni* and *Strotas* of the body resulting in an overall improvement in the formation and maintenance of *Sapta dhatus* and prevents ageing, Immunity thereby improving of resistance against diseases, body strength and improves mental status. Regular consumption of ghee, milk increases *Kapha* resulting in the delay of menopausal onset.

Types of *Rasayana*

Aachara Rasayana: It is related to lifestyle management. It is important to follow the regimens such as *Sadvritta, Svasthavritta, Dinacharya, Ratricharya* and *Ritucharya* because they help to relieve stress, delay in aging process and symptoms associated with menopause can be minimized.

Aahara Rasayana: In *Rajonivritti* there is *dhatukshaya* resulting *ojas-kshaya*. Dietary products such as black grams, milk, ghee and meat soups etc. are to be consumed. *Ghrita* plays a special role in improving *Sukradhatu*.

Dravya Rasayana: Actions of *Rasayana dravya* helps to

- Prevent senile degeneration.
- Promote body resistance and immunity.
- Improves memory and intelligence
- Increases physical and mental strength.
- Freedom from disease.
- Rejuvenates body and increases longevity.

Medicines Preparations like: *Ashwandhaghrita, Shatavari Ghrita, Rasonkshirpak, Bramhi Ghrita, Saraswatarishta, Chyawanprash* etc.

Sattvavjaya Chikitsa- Counselling and Reassurance, It is very important to maintain her physical as well as mental status, many psychiatric symptoms occurs during this period. In order to improve the quality of life is it out most important to follow *Sadvritta* (Righteous lifestyle) and *Swasthavritta* (Healthy life style).

Modern Management of Menopausal Syndrome

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

HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy)- In menopausal condition, hormones such as oestrogen, DHEA, melatonin and various systems are affected. Hence only oestrogen replacement therapy is not sufficient to overcome this condition. This therapy is needed in women who are- Symptomatic for 3-6 months. But there is high risk for CVD, Osteoporosis, and Alzheimer's disease. After surgical oophorectomy, premature menopause, who demand prophylactic HRT Oestrogen should be given in smallest effective dose for a short possible period of 3-6 months. Short term oestrogen therapy is useful in delaying osteoporosis and reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases in post-menopausal woman.

DISCUSSION

Menopause is a part of every woman's life. It is the stage when the menstrual period permanently stops signifying the end of her ability to have children. Although in classics, there are no direct references regarding *Rajonivritti* but *Acharya Charaka* mentioned that diseases are innumerable and Ayurvedic diagnostic approach mainly depends on symptoms based on the involvement of *Dosha*. Hence menopausal syndrome can be understood thoroughly on the basis of *Dosha* and *Dhatu*. *Rajonivritti* is physiological phenomenon but due to the fast life, rapid migration, stress, strain, tension, anxiety, depression, repeatedly results in *Dhatukshyavastha* leading to early aging process. Due to this aging process and incapability to bear the condition and it attains state of pathology. During *Rajonivritti kala* there is a peak level of *Pitta*. Further due to influence of *Jarakala, Vata* also remain in aggravated condition. And this aggravated *Vata* along with vitiated *Pitta* causes hot flushes, excessive sweating, sleep disturbance, irritability, dryness of vagina, etc. which are almost like *Vataja-Pittaja* symptoms. The vitiated

Vata dosha disturbs the other *Sharirika* and *Manasik dosha* (*Raja* and *Tama dosha*) resulting in various psychological disturbances. These are nothing but *Rajonivritti Avastha Janya Lakshana* or menopausal syndrome. A study shows that menopausal syndrome can be managed by *Rasayana dravyas* like *Saraswatarishta* and procedures like *Shirodhara*. It showed better results to combat disturbances of *Manas* and psychological, somatic symptoms of menopause. Hence, it can be often used as an alternative to HRT.^[28] Another study shows that formulation of three drugs: *Ashokarishta*, *Ashwagandha Churna* and *Praval Pishti* gives better results in somatic-psychological disturbances, GIT disturbances, white discharge and hot flushes, etc.^[29] Effect of *Shatavari* proves to be beneficial to women in her all stages life. Charaka has mentioned it as *Balya*, *Vayasthapana* and *Shukrajanana*. It contains natural phytoestrogens and so can be used as an alternative to synthetic HRT, and naturally rebalancing estrogen levels. Contemporary science rely more on use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and it is beneficial for short term use. This therapy provides a low dose of estrogen in the body that helps in alleviating symptoms such as hot flashes and vaginal dryness. According to a study benefits of HRT include prevention of osteoporotic fractures and colorectal cancer.^[30] Another study revealed as, treatment with HRT for the purpose of preventing cardiovascular diseases events in post-menopausal women (with or without cardiovascular disease) is not effective. Hence, HRT is discouraged as there is evidence that HRT causes an increased risk of invasive breast cancer, risk of stroke and venous thromboembolism and myocardial infarction.^[31] Thus with above analysis it can be said that Ayurveda provides a satisfactory management modality for menopause through preventive and curative approach.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of fundamental aspects of Ayurveda, concepts of contemporary science and considering above facts, both the term *Rajonivritti* and Menopause convey same meaning. *Rajonivritti* is not described as a diseased condition but stated as physiological state of life. *Tridoshic* analysis, *Dhatu* and *Agni avastha* of menopausal symptoms are necessary for thorough understanding of the disease. So it can be concluded that Ayurveda provides an effective management through *Panchakarma* therapies, herbal drugs, *Rasayana* therapy, following daily regimens with diet and lifestyle modification have a good impact on the body. Thus helps in the management of menopausal syndrome.

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