



RAJONIVRITTI (MENOPAUSE) AND HOW TO GO THROUGH MENOPAUSE GRACEFULLY WITH AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Rajonivritti (menopause) is the cessation of menstruation. Menarche (onset of menstruation) and menopause (cessation of menstruation) are the normal physiological processes in woman's life cycle, so Ayurveda hasn't explained rajonivritti in detail considering it a normal stage. As in Ayurveda prevention is given utmost importance and women during that era were having healthy lifestyle and were physically active too, so they used to go through this stage with ease without any much unpleasant symptoms, that may be the reason Acharyas haven't explained elaborately about this and asked to treat it symptomatically like jaravastha symptoms. But today's woman doesn't take care of herself keeping her health secondary to everything, not following proper diet and lifestyle and also having stressful life; so, all these factors add to her menopausal stage and she may experience several problems during this menopausal period making it an unpleasant stage of her life. At this stage hormonal changes occur due to which woman may have symptoms like hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, vaginal dryness, slowed metabolism etc. The woman experiences the symptoms what she experiences in kshaya/jaravastha like vasomotor, urogenital, cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, psychological symptoms (menopausal symptoms), so to combat all these symptoms she needs proper care, healthy diet, psychological fitness, and proper treatment. Though Ayurveda hasn't mentioned Rajonivritti in detail but with reference to different texts, its symptomatic treatment is possible. Ayurvedic texts have elaborately described the Ahara, Vihara, medicines and different upakrama like shirodhara etc which if followed properly the woman goes through this stage gracefully.

KEYWORDS: Rajonivritti; menopause; menopausal symptoms.

INTRODUCTION

Nirukti

The word rajonivritti is formed from two words; Rajas – menses, Nivritti – cessation or pause.^[1]

Rajas is formed from Rasadhatu and comes out through female genital tract every month for the duration of 3 days is termed as Raja. So, cessation of menses is rajonivritti. At the age of fifty years, the menstrual bleeding will get completely ceased, it is known as Rajonivritti. It occurs in the mid period of proutha avastha and jaravastha, that is in between the age of 45 to 50 years.^[2] It is also called Rajokshayam (Su.) and Rajonasham (B.P).^[3]

Menopause means permanent cessation of menstruation at the end of reproductive life due to loss of ovarian follicular activity. Climacteric is the phase of aging process during which a woman passes from the reproductive to the non-reproductive stage and this phase covers 5-10 years on either side of menopause.^[4]

Age of Menopause

- जरा पक्व शरीराणां याति पञ्चाशत्: क्षयं (सु.शा.३/११)^[5]
- मासि मासि रजः स्त्रीणां... ! वत्सरादद्वादशादूर्ध्वं यातिपञ्चाशतः क्षयम् (अ.ह.शा.१/७)
- अर्वागपि यदाहार विशेषादारोग्याच्च पूर्णं भवत इति परिषत्!(का.सं.जाति.४/७०)
- वृद्धा तत्परतो ज्ञेया सुरतोत्सववर्जिता ! (यो.र.स्त्रीरोग चि.१०/२०)

According to the different references given by Acharyas the menopausal age is fifty years and it is spontaneous and a physiological change. Acharya Kashyapa said diet and health of the woman plays role in menarche and menopause. Bhavmishra has described rajonasha among 80 types of vata rogas^[6]

यथा च बालस्य जीर्णस्य वा तरोः पुष्पफलम् पुष्पफलस्य वा तद्विधस्य गन्धो नोपलभ्यते...! योषितश्च.. अतीतपञ्चाशत् वर्षाया रजस्तन्याद्य इति (अ.सं.शा.१/२१)

Just as the smell is not appreciable in small flowers (buds) and old flowers likewise rajas and stanya are not appreciable or produced in females beyond 50 years^[7]

The rajonivritti can be classified in to two types; sahaj and asahaja^[8]

Sahaj Rajonivritti(prakriti/kalaja): it occurs at the age of fifty years. Physiologically as age advances due to increased Vata, decreased Kapha and Dhatukshaya results into menopause.

Asahaja Rajonivritti (Akalaja/ vaikrita): This may be due to dhatukshaya and doshabhighata.^[9] It can be taken as abnormal menopause; premature menopause below the age of 40, delayed menopause beyond 55 years of age and artificial menopause done by artificial means e.g., surgical removal of ovaries.^[10]

In Ayurveda Rajonivritti lakshanas are described according to the dosha and dhatu prevalence. Acharyas have also explained manasika lakshanas as psychological factors play important role in menopause.^{[11][12]}

Lakshanas of Rajonivritti

Lakshanas according to Dhatu		Lakshanas according to Doshas		Manasika Lakshanas
Rasa kshaya	Hrid spandanadhikya(palpitation), shrama(fatigue), shabdahishnuta (irritable to voice), trishana(thirst)	Vata pradhana	Vibandha, shirashula, hastapada supti, bhrama, adhamana, sandhi vedana, shabdasahishnuta, anidra	Bhaya, shoka, chinta, krodha mood swings etc
Rakta kshaya	Twak parushyam, rukshata, sira shaithilya, ushnataranga pratiti (hot flashes)	Pitta pradhana	Ushana Taranga pratiti, daha, mutradaha, sweda adhikyata, amlodgara, glani	
Mansa kshaya	Sandhi vedana, sandhisfutana	Kapha pradhana	Aruchi, agnimandya, lethargy, weight gain, etc	
Meda kshaya	Netra glani, swedadhikyam, asthi kshaya, asthi toda, asthi sandhi shaithilyata			
Majja kshaya	Bhrama, parvabheda			
Artava kshaya	Anartava, vaginal dryness			

When menopause occurs, all the reproductive organs show features of atrophy. Several features described in modern texts are quite similar to kshayavastha/ jaravastha features.^[13]

Menopausal Symptoms	
Vasomotor	Hot flash, palpitation, fatigue, weakness, perspiration
Urogenital	Atrophic epithelial changes, dyspareunia, vaginal infections, leucorrhoea, pruritis, UTI, uterine descent, etc
Skin & hair	Thinning, loss of elasticity, wrinkling of skin, slight balding
Osteoporosis	Backache, loss of height, kyphosis, fracture
Cardiovascular	Vascular atherosclerotic changes, vasoconstriction, thrombus formation, IHD, CAD, strokes
Cerebrovascular	Dementia, Alzheimer disease
Psychological changes	Anxiety, headache, insomnia, irritability, dysphasia, depression

Menopausal symptoms mainly occur due to estrogen deficiency.^[14] So, in modern science treatment is mainly based on hormone replacement therapy and symptomatic treatment. Hormone replacement therapy sometimes develop many unpleasant experiences making this stage

bothersome. Adopting Ayurveda at this stage not only provide relief from menopausal symptoms but also prevent long term side effects and make the woman healthy on the other side.

Management of Rajonivritti in Ayurveda

The following principles of management can be adopted: Ahara, Vihara, Aushadhi, Upakrama^[15]

Rajonivritti Management		
Ahara	Vihara	Yogasana
Food containing phytoestrogen like rice, wheat, oats, flax seeds, potatoes, garlic, apple, pomegranate	Atapa sewana: proper exposure to sunlight reduces risk of osteoporosis and breast cancer	Pranayam, chakrasana
Foods such as beans, bananas, potatoes can reduce homocysteine levels lowering the risk of heart attacks and heart diseases.	Regular exercise	Padahasthasana, Matsyendriyasana,
Onion and garlic contain cysteine sulfoxide derivatives. They may protect against the development of cancer	Avoid stress and strain	Pavana muktasana
Nutraceuticals		Makarsana, Shavasana etc

Abhyantara Aushadhi (internal medication)

As Acharyas have said rajonivritti symptoms should be treated like jaravastha. And rasayanas are surely very effective in dealing with kshaya of all dhatus of the body. So rasayanas are very effective in the management of

menopausal symptoms.^[16] Acharyas have described several rasayanas to delay jaravastha lakshanas and to combat jaravastha and kshayavastha lakshanas.

Rajonivritti Aushadha & Upakrama	
Rasayana	Ashwagandha churna, shatavari churna, vidarigandha churna, bala churna, amalaka churna, gokshuradi churna, arjuna churna, trivanga bhasma, praval pishti, kukkutatndwak bhasma, dashamula kwath, jatamansi kwath, guggul vati
Upakrama	Abhyanga, shirodhara, nasyakarma, gandusha dharana, basti karma, yonipichu

So if proper Aahar, vihara, yogasanas is taken the woman doesn't experience unpleasant symptoms, and if still it is there medications and upakramas are advised her to get rid of these symptoms without causing any untoward complications in the long run.

DISCUSSION

Rasayana helps in improving circulation, balya, medhya and agni vardhaka, ojo vardhaka, vayasthapaka properties. Rasayana is a way to achieve homeostasis and thus retarding the process of aging phenomenon and prevention of diseases. In healthy condition, Rasayana can be understood as nutritional dynamics for rejuvenation of body and psyche.^[17] Rasayana provides adequate nutrition to every cell, or tissue of body, it has adaptogenic action- enhancing body's ability to deal with stressors such as anxiety, fatigue or trauma etc. Rasayanas act as antioxidants, and are having immunomodulatory effect. With their Nootropic action, these are useful in degenerative disorders of brain like senile dementia, Alzheimer's disease. Rasayana also corrects cognitive dysfunction and prevents the disease in progression and also play important role in psychological well being.^[18] Upakramas like abhyanga, shirodhara etc with proper medicines; they all are very effective in combating the unpleasant experiences in on

or other way, here medicines used play their part and the therapy used adds to that effect of medications. Meditation helps us to get rid ourselves of emotional conflict, inner discord and psychological tension.^[19] This is responsible for the awakening of self awareness, hence one may penetrate to the very centre of life's highest values. In females major cause of her health problems is tension, anxiety, insecurity, frustration and rejection. So pranayama like rhythmic breathing, nadi shodhana, kumbhaka, Asanas like badha konasana, vakrasana, sarvangasana, matsyasana, shavasana etc can be advised to the lady.^[20]

CONCLUSION

In every stage of woman's life proper nutrition and healthy lifestyle is required and in Ayurveda; different paricharyas at different stages of woman life is explained elaborately to stay fit and to enjoy the experience of every stage not making them unpleasant. If a woman follows Ayurveda throughout her life, she hardly get any problems in different stages of her life cycle. But, if the lady gets unpleasant experiences, Acharyas also have described how to get over it with medications and different upakramas in details. Diet and medicines mentioned are rich in estrogen and rasayana also plays important role in combating psychological symptoms

and kshayaj avatha. The drugs mentioned in Ayurvedic medicines are antioxidants, anxiolytics, osteogenic, anti-depressants, and there are also procedures like yoni pichu with specific medicines give relief in topical symptoms. So, with Ayurveda the woman can turn her unpleasant experience of menopause into pleasant one and she goes through this stage gracefully without getting any interference to her healthy and beautiful life as she is to play different roles in her busy life.

Conflict of interest: None.

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