



## EXPLORING THE THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL OF RASAYANA IN RAJONIVRUTTI: A REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Menarche, puberty, pregnancy, parturition, menopause are very important biological phases of female life. The term menopause is the used in the females who undergoes the hormonal change. This is the end of the reproductive stage in the women, during this phase menstruation and ovulation ceases. Similar hormonal changes occur in male too, that is termed as Andropause. About one third of life span has to be spent without menstruation. For so long period a woman cannot afford estrogen replacement especially because of its side effects and complications. That's why we have to search for better and safer options. Here in this paper endocrine physiology and possible management through Ayurveda will be discussed in brief. At the same time scopes of *Rasayana* is also explored.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, *Rajonivrutti*, Menopause, *Rasayana*, Rejuvenation.

### INTRODUCTION

Menopause is generally defined as the cessation of menses for period of 12 months or a period equivalent to three previous cycles or the time of cessation of ovarian function resulting in permanent amenorrhea.<sup>[1]</sup> During reproductive years, women are protected by female hormones, oestrogen and progesterone.

In menopausal women, an oestrogen deficient phase accelerates the aging process resulting in symptoms of menopause with decreasing life expectancy. Also, Regression of ovarian function occurs, causing depletion of primordial ovarian follicles resulting in symptoms of menopause with decreasing life expectancy. Also, Regression of ovarian function occurs, causing depletion of primordial ovarian follicles resulting in diminished oestradiol levels. These diminished hormonal levels lead to the various symptoms seen in menopausal phase which includes vasomotor symptoms like hot flushes, night sweats, headache, insomnia, dizziness, etc. Psychological symptoms include mood swings, anxiety, depression, irritability, etc. Other symptoms include loss of libido, dyspareunia, osteoporotic changes as well as cardiovascular changes.<sup>[2]</sup>

In *Ayurveda* the context of menopause is depicted as "*Jara Pakwa Avastha*" of body and *Rajonivrutti*. According to Acharya Sushruta and various other references, 50 years is mentioned as the age of *Rajonivrutti*.<sup>[3]</sup> *Rajonivrutti Janya Laksana* is a group of symptoms produced by degenerative changes in the body. Degenerative changes are explained in *Ayurveda*

as *Dhatukshaya Lakshana*. *Vata Dosha* dominance is seen in the later stage of life. On other hand menopause is also associated with *Vata Dosha* dominance stage of life, therefore symptoms in menopausal phase like insomnia, anxiety, urinary symptoms, osteoporotic changes are due to dominance of *Vata Dosha*. Along with that *Pitta Dosha* symptoms like hot flushes, irritability, Gaining in body fat, particularly abdominal weight gain is *Kapha Dosha* etc. are seen, during this phase.

To overcome the degenerative process of the body tissue, *Acharyas* have described *Rasayana Chikitsa*. *Rasayana* includes drugs which promotes longevity and improve the quality of life. Thus, an effort is being made here, to study *Rasayana therapy*, on Menopausal syndrome, conceptually, based on Available information in *Ayurvedic texts* and other contemporary resources.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To study, understand and compile *Rajonivrutti Janya Lakshana* from *Ayurvedic classic texts*.
2. To study menopausal symptoms according to modern science.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Modern concept

Menopause means permanent cessation of menstruation at the end of reproductive life due to loss of ovarian follicular activity. It is the point of time when last and final menstruation occurs.

### Endocrinal Changes<sup>[4]</sup>

First change in ovarian function is failure in ovulation or absent or deficient corpus luteum formation that's why the first hormone to become deficient intermittently is progesterone. While reduction of plasma estradiol in premenopausal women stimulates negative feedback mechanism of the hypothalamus and pituitary causing raised follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) which is the most characteristic endocrinal change and the first detectable sign of approaching menopause. There are three phases of endocrinal changes at climacteric as follows:

#### Phase I: Hypothalamic Pituitary Hyperactivity

Starts 5 to 15 years before menopause

- Compensatory for increased resistance of ovarian follicles and reduced follicular hormone secretion
- Evidenced by elevated FSH and later luteinizing hormone (LH) associated with hot flushes. The pituitary become exhausted in late menopause.

#### Phase II: Ovulation and Corpus Luteum Failure

- Anovulatory cycle and shortened luteal phase
- Deficient progesterone and unopposed estrogen secretion may lead to abnormal uterine bleeding (AUB), endometrial hyperplasia.

#### Phase III: Ovarian Follicular Failure

- Failure in follicular development leads to reduced estrogen.
- Ovarian stroma remains active along with adrenals produce androstenedione and testosterone. Estrogen produced by peripheral conversion.

### Menopausal Symptoms

Apart from cessation of menstruation some of following symptoms may appear in different women:

1. Vasomotor symptoms- including hot flashes, night sweats, and flushing
2. Urogenital symptoms
3. Osteoporosis and fracture
4. Cardio-vascular disease
5. Cerebrovascular disease
6. Psychological changes
7. Skin and hair
8. Breast changes
9. Sexual dysfunction
10. Ophthalmic dysfunction
11. Dementia and cognitive decline.

### Diagnosis of Menopause<sup>[5]</sup>

1. Cessation of menstruation for consecutive 12 month during climacteric.
2. Appearance of menopausal symptoms "hot flush" and "night sweat".
3. Vaginal cytology - showing maturation index of at least 10/85 /5 (feature of low estrogen)
4. Serum estradiol; 40 mIU/ml (three value at weeks interval required)

### Ayurvedic concept of Menopause

Human life span is grossly divided into 3 stages in literature, namely *Balyavastha*, *Madhyamavastha* and *Vrudhavastha* which are dominated by *Kapha*, *Pitta*, *Vata* respectively. *Acharya Sushruta* also classified *Madhyamavastha* in 4 groups - *Vrudhi*, *Yuwa*, *Dhatu Sampurnata*, *Kshaya*. In all contexts of Ayurvedic literature the age for *Rajonivritti* is stated around 50 years. *Rajonivritti* is phase where women pass from *Madhyamavastha* to *Vrudhavastha*. *Sushruta Acharya* has explained that there is *Shareera-Shaithilya* (weakening of tissues) in *Vrudha-Avastha*. This stage of life is dominated by *Vatadosha*, this affects the female body. The dominant *Vata Dosha* specially with *Laghu* and *Ruksha Guna* results in reduction in *Dravata* of *Rasa Dhatu*. This further leads to *Dhatukshya* starting from *Rasa Dhatu*, further respective *Updhatu Kshaya* takes place. Thus, leading to *Artava Nasha* (amenorrhea). The vitiated *Vata Dosha* also disturbs the other *Sharira* as well as *Manas Dosha (Raja and Tama Dosha)* leading to various psychological disturbances. Thus, according to *Ayurveda*, we can make a correlation between the different menopausal symptoms seen in the body. Following are some probable causative factors for *Rajonivritti*.

#### Swabhava<sup>[6]</sup>

Natural phenomenon are names under this heading. "*Swabhava*" as a causative factor in a generalized way. Nothing is eternal in universe and thus production of *Rajah* and then its declining nature is *Swabhava*. It can't be explained by *Karya-Karana Bhava*. Thirst, hunger, sleep, aging and death are *Swabhavik Vyadhis* described by *Sushrutachyara*.

#### Kala<sup>[7,8]</sup>

The "*Vaya*" is described on the basis of *Kala*. The characteristics of particular age or the changes taking place in different stages of age have to attribute to the *Kala*. *Acharya Charaka* beautifully explains that the same foetus after passing of sometime becomes child, young and old. Thus; it is clear that after a specific time, female body manifest "*Rajonivritti*" at the age of 50 years then process of aging starts.

#### Dhatukshay<sup>[9]</sup>

Leads to *Vata* vitiation. With advancing age, progressive vitiation of *Vata* due to its fundamental properties of *Ruksha* (Unctuousness), *Chala* (unstable), *Laghu* (light), *Bahu* (talkativeness), *Shighra* (quick) and *Sheeta* (cold), further precipitates the *Soshana* and *Kshaya* (involution and atrophy) of different *Dhatu*. This degeneration manifests as *Indriya Kshaya* (loss of this perceptive powers of sensory organs), *Bala Kshaya* (loss of strength) and *Virya Kshaya* (loss of reproductive strength). This may explain various symptoms of menopause related to degenerative changes in body such as urogenital atrophy, thinning of the membranes of the vulva, vagina, cervix, and also of the outer urinary tract, shrinking and loss in elasticity of all of the outer and

inner genital areas and skin, breast atrophy, decreased libido, problems reaching orgasm and dyspareunia or painful intercourse.

### **Karma**<sup>[10]</sup>

Ayurveda has considered *Karma* as a generalized factor for any activity. *Karma* is considered by two ways. First is *Purvajanmakrita* and other is, *Aajanmakrita* (*Karma* of this life). The prior is responsible for many things, because the science believes in the concept of *Atma* and *Punarjanama*. The later one has a direct relationship between *Karana* and *Karya*, which includes all the *Pragyaparadhas* for diseased condition and vice a versa.

### **Abhighata**<sup>[11]</sup>

Acharya *Sushruta* has mentioned that the *Viddhata* of the roots of *Artavavaha Srotas* i.e., *Garbhashaya* and *Aartavavhi Dhamanis* (uterus and uterine or ovarian arteries) will lead to *Artavanasha*. This *Viddhata* may take place due to any direct or indirect trauma (*Abhighata*) to the *Artavavaha Srotas*, and will directly lead to *Artavanasha* and manifests as *Akalaja Rajonivritti*.

### **Vitiated Vata Dosha**

"*Vayu*" as an active substance in the body, which is assumed to be a major factor behind initiation of every process. *Vayu* is responsible for *Rajah Utpatti* as well as its cyclic expulsion at every month. Hence, it can be considered as a causative factor for *Rajah Nivritti* also, and any vitiation of these factors may alter this process. Vitiated stage *Vayu* in the body is very well understood in the case of *Rajonivritti*. Factors like *Vridhdavastha*, generalized *Dhatukshaya*, generalized *Rukshata* and *Shosha* will lead *Vatavridhhi*. Hence, a vicious cycle will come into play and all the functions of *Vata* will be affected including *Rajah Utpatti*, which may be manifested as *Rajonivritti*. In this way, *Vayu* is responsible for *Rajonivritti*.

### **Types of Rajonivritti**

- 1) *Kalaja Rajonivritti*
- 2) *Akalaja Rajonivritti*

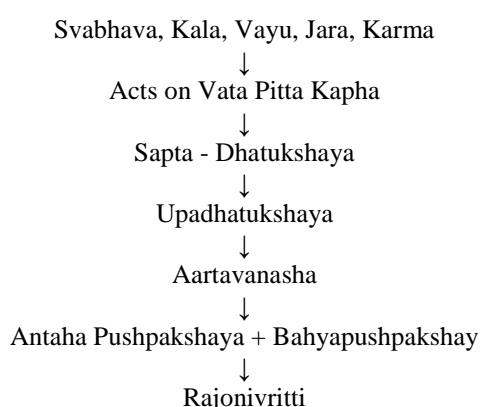
### **Lakshanas of Rajonivritti**<sup>[12]</sup>

As there is no direct reference available regarding *Lakshanas* of *Rajonivritti* in the Ayurvedic classics, the clinical symptoms manifested by the patients of *Rajonivritti* have to be considered and can be grouped under following Ayurvedic parameters.

**Table 1: Rajonivritti Lakshana classified as per Doshas.**

<i>Doshaja</i>	<i>Vataja</i>	<i>Pittaja</i>	<i>Kaphaja</i>
	<i>Shira Shula</i> <i>Hrud Spandandhikya</i>	<i>Ushnanubhuti</i> <i>Daha</i> <i>Swedadhikya</i>	<i>Hrud- Dravata</i> <i>Angmarda</i>
	<i>Hasta Pada Supti</i> <i>Shabdahishnuta</i>	<i>Ratrisweda</i> <i>Trisha</i>	<i>Raukshya</i> <i>Bhrama</i>
	<i>Balakshyaya</i> <i>Adhmana</i> <i>Bhrama</i> <i>Katishula</i> <i>Sandhivedana</i> <i>Anidra/ Alpanidra</i>	<i>Yonidaha</i> <i>Mutradaha</i>	<i>Shaithilya</i>
<b><i>Sharirika</i></b>	<i>Rasakshaya</i>	<i>Shabdahatva</i> <i>Hridhravatva</i> <i>Shula</i> <i>Shrama</i> <i>Shosha</i> <i>Trisha.</i>	
	<i>Rakta Kshaya</i>	<i>Twaka Rukshata</i> <i>Sira Shaithilya.</i>	
	<i>Mamsa Kshaya</i>	<i>Sphik-Gandadi Shushkata</i> <i>Toda</i> <i>Rukshata</i> <i>Glani.</i> <i>Sandhisphutana</i> <i>Sandhi Vedana</i> <i>Dhamani Shaithilya</i>	
	<i>Meda Kshaya</i>	<i>Anga Rukshata</i> <i>Shrama</i> <i>Shosha</i> <i>Krushata.</i>	

	<i>Asthikshaya</i>	<i>Asthitoda</i> <i>Danta-Nakha-Kesha-Roma (Rukshata /Shatana)</i> <i>Sandhishaitilya.</i>
	<i>Majja Kshaya</i>	<i>Asthi Saushirya</i> <i>Asthi toda</i> <i>Daurbalya</i> <i>Bhrama</i> <i>Tamodarshana</i> <i>Sandhi Shunyata</i>
	<i>Shukrakshaya</i>	<i>Yoni vedana</i> <i>Shrama</i> <i>Daurbalya</i> <i>Panduta</i>
<b>Mansik</b>	<i>Krodha, Shoka, Bhaya, Dwesha, Smriti Hras, UtsahaHani, Dairya Hani, Shirah Shula Vishada, Chinta, Medhahras, Alpa Harsha and Priti Parakramahani</i>	



**Fig. 1: Probable Samprapti of Rajonivritti.**

### Management

Before deciding upon a treatment, the physician should minutely examine and determine, *Dushya* (the *Dhatu* and *Mala* involved), *Desha* (the area of the body where disease is manifested, the living place of the patient), *Bala* (strength of the patient), *Kala* (season, how old is the disease, age of the person etc.), *Anala* (digestive power of the patient), *Prakriti* (Body constitution), *Vayas* (age of the patient and disease), *Satva* (mind, tolerance

capacity of the patient), *Satmya* (The food and activities to which the patient is accustomed to), *Ahara* (food habits) and *Avastha* (stages of the diseases) of the patient and then only should decide the appropriate treatment.<sup>[13]</sup>

A unique concept of Ayurveda is Rasayana therapy, it is known to cause reversal of age and physiology.

Rasayana Chikitsa is mainly used for maintaining the health of healthy individuals although it can be used for diseased also.

These *Rasayana* cleans and activate the micro-circulatory channels i.e., *Sroto Shuddhi* leading to improved tissue health and their quality.<sup>[14]</sup>

Appropriate applications have potential to ward off problems related not only to aging and naturalmenopause but also in menopausal symptoms induced due to surgical, medical and other reasons.

Acts through mechanism of *Rasa-Samvahan* (circulation of nutrient juices), *Dhatu, Agni* and *Srotas*, it nourishes bodily tissues through micro- nutrition, thus helping in regeneration, revival and revitalization of *Dhatu*.

**Table 2: Showing action of Rasayana Aushadhi at different levels in body.**

Acting at all levels of <i>Rasa</i>	<i>Draksha (Vitis vinifera Linn.)</i> , milk, <i>Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus)</i> , <i>Salparni (Desmodium gangeticum)</i> etc.	Enriching the nutritional value of the circulating plasma
At the level of <i>Agni</i>	<i>Pippali (Piper longum Linn.)</i> , <i>Haritaki (Terminalia chebula)</i> , <i>Citraka (Plumbago zyleneica)</i> ,	Digestion and metabolism, digestion, absorption and metabolism, and has some anabolic effect.
At the level of <i>Srotamsi</i>	<i>Guggulu (Commiphoramukul)</i> , <i>Pippali (Piper longum Linn.)</i> , <i>Rasona (Allium cepa)</i>	The microcirculatory channels carrying nutrition to the tissues

### Aushadha Rasayana

Some of the *Rasayan Yoga* (formulations) that may be helpful is *Ashwagandha Rasayan*, *Hartitaki Rasayan*, *Amalki Rasayan*, *Pippali Rasayan*, *Vidanga Rasayan*, *Shilajatu Rasayan*, *Triphala Rasayana*, *Vardhman*

*Pippali Rasayana* etc. They can be used in menopausal women for various indications.

### Ahara Rasayana

*Ahara* is *Dhatuposhak* and *Dhatu* is responsible for the maintenance of compactness and strength, *Dhatu*



reflects in the terms of *Sara*.<sup>[15]</sup>

*Agnimandya*, *Ama* generation and accumulation are major problems faced in menopause to conquer them diet becomes easier and more important.

Menopausal women should refrain from *Vata* vitiating food. *Laghu* (light) and *Santarpaka* (nutritive) diet is recommended. Packaged, processed, frozen, canned food and erratic food habits should be avoided.

### Achara Rasayana<sup>[16]</sup>

Achara Rasayana (social and personal code of conduct) is unique concept of socio-moral and behavioural therapy which is preventive in nature. It is a non-pharmacological approach by which one can acquire the *Rasayana effect*. It broadly includes personal and social behaviour and *Sattvika Ahara*.

- One should maintain inner peace, maintain cleanliness of body and mind, do *Japa*, control his senses, and give up exhaustive exercises and practice to be free from *Ahamkara* (ego).
- About social behaviour it has been said that one should always speak truth, do not show anger, have sympathetic behaviours to others, remain conscious about the change of body and environment etc.
- State of mind such as greed, hate, and dullness cause *Doshic* imbalances and lead to a state of *Vikriti* (diseases).
- From the options presented, evaluation based on *Rogi-Roga Pariksha* (examination of the patient as an individual irrespective of his disease and examination of the disease entity/disease state) specific drug and therapeutics can be selected as per individual needs.

### DISCUSSION

*Dhatu Kshaya*, *Vaat* vitiation, *Kaala*, *Vaya* all factors manifests to transition in menopausal phase, which may pass uneventful in most women.

At the *Dosha* level, this involves transition from *Pitta* dominant phase to *Vata* dominant phase of life; while aging and natural menopause are different processes but the consequences of each are similar.

To prevent or to reduce the symptoms *Vayahsthanan*, *Vajikar*, *Balya*, *Rasayana*, *Vata-Pitta* pacifying drugs provide a vast range of options. For research purpose principles and philosophy of Ayurveda must be kept under consideration.

A condition such as surgical menopause or premature menopause occurring due to genetic or medical reasons, where menopause occurs before the age of 40 years and is not a part of natural aging process, requires the need to distinguish between chronological age and endocrinal change.

Assessment using elaborate methodology of *Rogi Roga*

*Pariksha* and deciding therapeutics based on Ayurveda. Beyond HRT, Ayurveda for Menopause and Associated Aging Problems, International suggested treatment modalities can be used without any untoward effects for these individuals also. Further, women having menopausal symptoms are led to believe that estrogen decline must be replaced and medical intervention is needed. In majority of such women, the depletion of estrogen which occurs during menopause does not need to be replaced; estrogen is only required for women who have significant menopausal symptoms due to deficiency of the hormones. Understanding age related changes and *Dosha* involvement at individual level a timely intervention may help such individuals and prevent symptoms also.

### CONCLUSION

Ayurveda and modern medicine have basic epistemological differences. Ayurvedic wisdom and logic is more health-oriented than disease-oriented. Started during midlife as component of preventive health care, management of menopausal symptoms based on Ayurvedic principals can not only reduce the menopausal symptoms but can also effectively address the aging and allied problems. It can improve the quality of life as well as life expectancy of aging female population. It provides wide range of treatment options in the form of single herbs, formulations, therapeutic procedures and life style modifications, which can be utilized as per individual needs. Single drugs given under *Jeevaneeya*, *Vayahsthanan* and *Balya Mahakashaya*, formulations and *Rasayan Yoga*, *Ghritha Yoga* and *Achara Rasayana*, *Aahar Rasayana* opens new avenues for scientific researches. Although menopausal syndrome does not find mention in Ayurvedic literature, today's growing population of suffering female prompts us to look for effective and safer alternatives. It is not possible to name each and every disease; it is the responsibility of the physician to identify the nature, sign and symptoms of presenting ailment and treat it accordingly.

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