

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

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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 vary 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 *Stripushpa* (Menstrual blood)-
Ritumatyaapyudakyaapi Syadrajah Pushpam Artavam.²

- *Raja Guna* (A type of *Manas Dosha*)- *Gunah Sattwam Rajastamah*.³
- *Parag* (Pollen grains of flower)- *Pushparasah Paragah Sumanorajah*.⁴

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 *Vyakhya 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 *Vayu*.^{7,8,9}

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 SharirikDhatu*" by *Acharya Bhela*.¹¹
2. *VayaParimana and Swabhavvash* (natural) *Dhatu Paripurnata* have been accounted by *Kashyapa*.¹²

3. *Kala, Swabhava, Yoni Abhivridhi, and Vaya* by *Acharya Sushruta*.¹³
4. *Upchaya RoopaVridhi* by *Acharya Bhavmishra*.¹⁴
5. *Sodhana Prakriya* by *Dalahana (MalarupaArtava)*.¹⁵
6. *Apana Vayu Kriya* by *Acharya Charaka*.¹⁶
7. Influence of *Chandra* and *Mangal Grahas*.¹⁷

NIVRITTI

Nirukti:

Word *Nivriddhi* is derived from *Sanskrit Varnas ni* and *Vrit*.

Synonyms of the word *Nivriddhi* like *Apravriddhi, Uparama, Virati, Vyparati, 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 *Nivriddhi* is understood as end or cessation. Thus, the whole term *Rajonivriddhi* denotes a stopping point of a process or activity, means end of *Artava Pravritti* or cessation of menstruation.

***Rajonivriddhi Kala* - (Age of Menopause):**

Rajonivriddhi Kala is mentioned by almost all the *Acharyas* without any controversy, few direct references are available regarding it, According to *Sushruta Samhita*.¹⁸, *Ashtanga Sangrah*.¹⁹, *Ashtanga Hridaya*.²⁰ and *Bhavprakash*.²¹, 50 years is mentioned as the age of *Rajonivriddhi*. *Acharya Arundatta* opines that the age mentioned above is a probable age and not a fixed one.

***Nidana of Rajonivriddhi*:**

Some factors are mentioned by *Acharyas* in the context of "*Rajah Utpatti Hetus*". These factors can be considered as *Rajah Nivriddhi Hetus* also. Besides this, some very specific factors also can be considered as the causative factors for *Rajonivriddhi as Kala, Swabhava, Vayu, Karma / environment, Dhatukshaya, Dosha-Dhatu-Mal, Abhighata, Ahara, Vihara, Mansikhetusetc.*

(1) Kala:

In Ayurveda, the "Vaya" is described on the basis of *Kala*. As this "Vaya Avastha" itself is manifested by the virtue of *Kala*. *Acharya Charaka* has beautifully explains that the same foetus after passing of some-time becomes child, young and old.²² Thus, 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*.²³

(3) Vayu:

In human body, out of five types of *Vayu*, "Apana Vaya" and "Vyana Vayu" are mainly responsible for the functions related to *Artava*.²⁴ As *Artava* is related to "Artavavaha Srotas", 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.²⁵ 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 *Vaya*, Generalized *Dhatukshaya*, Generalized *Rukshata* and *Shosha* will lead to *Vata Vriddhi*. 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*.²⁶

(4) Dhatukshaya:

Dhatu Paripurnata is considered as a responsible factor for "Rajah Utpatti". For human being, reproduction is ultimate goal, in *Balya Avastha*, this cannot be achieved because the status of *Dhatu* is immature,

and therefore the *Rajah* is not manifested in *Balya Avastha*. But, in *Yuva Avastha*, *Dhatu* 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 *Jarapakva avastha* natural degeneration of body tissue causes loss of *Artava* also. The same thing is applied for *Rajonivritti* also, which manifests at *Jarapakva Avastha*.

(5) Karma / Environment:

Acharya Charak pointed out that the duration of lifespan of an individual depends on two factors²⁷ i.e. *Daiva*, *Karma* of former life, *Purshartha*. (*Karma* of this life).

(6) Abhigata:

*Acharya Sushruta*²⁸ has mentioned that the *Viddhata* of the *Artavavaha Srotas* i.e. *Garbhashaya* and *Aartava Vahini Dhamanis* will lead to *Artavanasha*. This *Viddhata* may take place due to any direct or indirect trauma (*Abhigata*) to the *Artavavaha Srotas*, which will directly lead to *Artavanasha* and will manifests as *Akalaja Rajonivritti*.

(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 *Mala* and intellection.²⁹ 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) Aharatmak Hetu

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: hair loss, whitening of hair, wrinkling of skin, fall of teeth, Impotency and *Indriyanaash*.³⁰

Excessive or single use of Amlarasa causes Decomposition of muscles, cachexia, and weakness.³¹

Excessive or single use of Katurasa causes Emacia-

tion, joint disease, fainting, giddiness, production of heat, thirst anorexia.³²

Based on ViruddhaAhara:

- Rasa (taste)Viruddha,
- Guna (properties)Virudha,
- Veerya (potency)Viruddha,
- Desha (place)Viruddha,
- Kala (time) Viruddha,
- Agni(digestive fire) Viruddha,
- Matra (amount)Viruddha,
- Satmya (wholesome)Viruddha,
- Sanskara (mode of preparation)Viruddha,
- Koshtha (bowel)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.³³ 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, KrodhaBahulta, 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. 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 Yapyya. So, Rajonivritti is Yapyya 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: DoshajaLakshanas

Vataja Lakshana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shirah Shula (headache) • HridSpandanadhikya (palpitation) • Sandhi Vedana (joints pain) • Hasta-Pada Supti (numbness in upper and lower limbs) • ShabdaAsahisnuta (intolerance of sound) • Bhrama (unconsciousness) • Atopa (flatulence) • Vibandha (constipation) • Anidra / Alpanidra (insomnia) • Katishula (lower backache) • BalaKshaya (loss of strength)
Pittaja Lakshana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ushnaanubhuti (hot feeling/hot flushes) • Daha (burning) • Yonidaha (vaginitis) • SwedaAdhikyata (excessive sweating) • Ratrisweda (night sweats) • Trisha (excessive thirst) • Mutradaha (burning mictuaration) • Glani (exhaustion-even without any work)
Kaphaja Lakshana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angamarda (bodyache) • Bhrama (unconsciousness) • Raukshaya (dryness all over body)

(B) Dhatukshayaja Lakshanas:

Symptoms of Dhatukshaya observed in the patients of

Rajonivrittri, can be grouped according to the individual Dhatukshayaja Lakshanas as follows.

Table 2: Dhatukshayaja Lakshanas

RasaKshayajanyaLakshan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shabdasahtva (intolerance to loud sounds) • Hriddravatva (chest pain) • Shula (pain) • Shosha (emaciation) • Trisha (thirst)
RaktaKshayajanya Lakshan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TwakaRukshata (dryness in skin) • Sira Shaithilya (dilated veins)
MansKshayajanyaLakshan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AngaRukshata i.e. vaginal dryness) • Shosha (emaciation) • Krushata (thin)

<i>Asthi Kshayajanya Lakshan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Asthitoda</i>(bones pain) • <i>Danta-Nakha-Kesha- Roma</i> (<i>Rukshata / Shatana</i>(dryness/falling of teeth, nails, hairs etc) • <i>Sandhi-shaithilya</i>(laxity in joints)
<i>Majja Kshayajanya Lakshan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>AsthiSaushirya</i>(fragile bones) • <i>AsthiToda</i>(bones pain) • <i>Daurbalya</i>(weakness) • <i>Bhrama</i>(unconsciousness) • <i>Tamo Darshana</i> (darkness in front of eyes)
<i>Shukra Kshayajanya Lakshan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Yoni Vedana</i> (vulval pain) • <i>Daurbalya</i>(weakness) • <i>Panduta</i> (anemic)

(C) ***Manasika Lakshanas:***

Following *Mansika lakshanas* are not less important, they vitiated by *manovahasrotas*.

Krodha (anger), *Shoka* (sorrow), *Bhaya* (fear), *Dwesha* (hate), *Smriti Hras* (memory loss), *UtsahaHani* (loss of excitement), *Dairyra Hani* (impatience), *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: *Rajonivriti* 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.³⁸ *Acharya Chakrapani* while commenting on this verse, mentions that the word “*Nishpratikriya*” means ordinary treatment and measures have no effect on *Rajonivriti* 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*. Vitiating of *Doshas* and *Dhatu* is due to 4 important causes, those are casual cause (*Agantuj*), physical (*Sharirika*), mental (*Mansika*) and natural cause (*Swabhavaja*.) In Ayurveda, *Rajonivriti* 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 arises that why *Rajonivriti* 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 *Rajonivriti Awasthajanya Lakshanas* were very less. Almost all the *Acharyas* of *BrihatTrayi* and *LaghuTrayi* and others have described the age of *Rajonivriti* 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 *Dhatu*s is better in *Yuvavastha*, which reduces during the *Praudha Awastha*. *Acharya Charaka* and *Sushruta* mentioned the effect of ageing on *Dhatu*s as “*Hiyamana*” or “*Kshiyamana*” which means there is decrease in the quality and quantity of the *Dhatu*s so the *Kshiyamana* of the *Rasa Dhatu* ultimately *Hras* of the *Updhatu* i.e. *Artava* and resulting into *Rajonivriti*. The majority of the *Lakshanas* of *Rajonivriti* are due to *VataVridhhi*, *Kapha Kshaya*, *Ashaya Apakarsha* of *Pitta* by aggravated *Vata*; vitiating of *ManovahaSrotas*; and *Dhatukshaya*, which all are manifesting as a part of ageing.

CONCLUSION

As *Rajonivritti* is a naturally occurring condition in female body; it can be categorized under *Nishpratyantik* or *Swabhavikavyadhis* as that of *Jara* (aging) described in the classics. The various symptoms of *Jaravastha* are more likely observed in *RajonivrittiJanyaAvastha* 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 *Rasayana* etc. *Jaravastha* synergistically lead to particular *Rasa- Rakta Dhatukshaya* 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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