MAINTENANCE OF MENOPAUSE THROUGH AYURVEDA- A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

*Rajonivrutti* (Menopause) is the point of time when last and final menstruation occurs. Due to increased life expectancy, about one third of life span will be spent during the period of estrogen deprivation stage with long term symptomatic and metabolic complications. In modern literature, hormone replacement therapy is indicated to overcome the short term and long term consequences of estrogen deficiency. But it has its own side effects. *Ayurveda* has a lot of drugs and procedures to maintain and to minimize *Rajonivrutti Janya Vikara*. Thus, *Ayurvedic* drugs can be used as a substitute to hormone replacement therapy for the maintenance of menopause and in addition to cure menopausal symptoms.


INTRODUCTION

Every substance which is created on this earth has to be destroyed or deteriorated. Menopause means permanent stoppage of menstruation at the end of reproductive life for twelve consecutive months without any other pathology. During this period there is gradual but progressive loss of ovarian follicular activity. The age of menopause is genetically predetermined. It ranges between 45-55 years, average being 50 years.¹¹ It is point of time when last and final menstruation occurs. The phase of ‘menarche’ and ‘menopause’ has important influences on the physical, psychological, social, and emotional aspects of a woman. The menopause is a natural phenomenon and one of the life’s important milestones. Due to increased life expectancy, about one third of life span will be spent during the period of estrogen deprivation stage with long term symptomatic and metabolic complications. In
majority, apart from cessation of menses, no more symptoms are evident. In some women, symptoms appear like vasomotor symptoms (hot flushes), psychological changes like mood disturbance, insomnia, cognitive difficulty, anxiety, depression, memory loss (Manasa Bhavas), sexual dysfunction, dysuria, vaginal infections, wrinkling of skin, osteoporotic changes, cardiovascular changes etc. In some women, menstrual cycle shows irregularity with or without excessive bleeding prior to menopause.

Prevalence of psychological and somatic symptoms is seen in 80% of women in perimenopausal period.[2] Being a common and distressing problem; it needs effective and safe treatment. In modern literature, HRT (hormone replacement therapy) is indicated to overcome the short term and long term consequences of estrogen deficiency. But it has its own side effects. It can lead to endometrial cancer, breast cancer, venous thromboembolic disease, coronary heart disease, gall bladder disease. Thus, Ayurvedic drugs can be used as an alternative therapy to HRT.

In Ayurvedic texts, very few references are available on this physiological event under the heading Rajonivrutti. The age of Rajonivrutti is said to be around 50 years.[3] It may be probably correlated with Avakrutta Nashtartava (physiological) and Artava-Kshaya also.[4] Menopausal symptoms are more nearer to Vata Vridh symptoms. Because this age is Sandhikala of two Avastha means a mid period between Yuvavastha and Vridhdhavastha. During this period there is intermediate level of Pitta and peak level of Vata aggravation. Along with vitiated Pitta, Vata creates hot flushes, excessive sweating, sleep disturbance, irritability, dryness of vagina etc. which are similar to Vataja-Pittaja symptoms. To minimize menopausal symptoms, Vata should be in equilibrium. It can be pacified with the Ayurvedic drugs like Ashwagandha, Shatavari, Bala, Raasna, Brahmi, Chopachini, Dashmoola, Praval Pishiti, Godanti Bhasma, Saptamrita Lauha, Chavyanaprasha, Saraswatarishta etc. and procedures like Shirodhara, Vasti Karma, Nasya.

DISCUSSION ON DISEASE REVIEW

Menopause means permanent stoppage of menstruation at the end of reproductive life for twelve consecutive months without any other pathology. During this period there is gradual but progressive loss of ovarian follicular activity. Menopause is a natural process just as puberty is natural. At the age of 32-50 years woman is called as Adhirudha and after 50 years she is called as Vriddh in accordance with Bhavaprakasha Nighantu.[5] The average age for menopause is 45 years, but many factors influence the time of the menopause like hereditary,
her general state of health and the climate in which she lives. So Arundatta opines that this is the probable age. He mentioned the word Prayika for this probability.

Few years prior to menopause, along with depletion of follicles, the follicles become resistant to pituitary gonadotrophins. As a result, effective folliculogenesis is impaired and leads to diminished estradiol production.

Nidana
In modern science, the main reason is diminished estrogen. In Ayurveda literature, there is no separate description about its Nidana, Purvarupa, Rupa, Samprapti. Some factors may be considered to be involved in causing menopause.

- Kala.
- Swabhava.
- Vata.
- Karma.
- Dhatukshaya.

- Abhighata- causes Artava Nasha as seen in post-surgical menopause, post-radiation menopause.

Rupa
Due to estrogen deficiency, folliculogenesis disturb which lead to anovulation, oligo-ovulation, premature corpus luteum. Ovaries shrink in size, become wrinkled, thinning of cortex. Fallopian tubes show feature of atrophy. The uterus becomes smaller. The endometrium becomes thin and atrophic. The vagina becomes narrower. Vaginal pH becomes alkaline. Bladder and urethra’s epithelium becomes thin and is prone to damage and infection. Supporting ligaments lose their tone. Following menopause, there is loss of bone mass by about 3-5% per year. Risk of cardiovascular disease is high. In some women, symptoms appear like vasomotor symptoms (hot flushes), psychological changes like mood disturbance, insomnia, cognitive difficulty, anxiety, depression, memory loss (Manasa Bhavas), sexual dysfunction, dysuria, vaginal infections, wrinkling of skin, osteoporotic changes, cardiovascular changes etc. In some women, menstrual cycle shows irregularity with or without excessive bleeding prior to menopause.
Samprapati

*Kalaja Rajonivrutti* (Spontaneous Menopause) – *Kala, Swabhava, Vata* are the responsible factors.

*Akalaja Rajonivrutti* (Induced Menopause) - *Karma, Abhighata* (*Vedhana* of *Artavavaha Srotasa*), *Dhatukshaya* specially of *Rasa* and *Rakta* is causing *Artava Nasha* or *Kshaya*.

Chikitsa

As it is the period of *Vata Vriddhi* and *Pitta aggravation*, the selection of treatment and *Aahara* should be *Vatashamaka, Pittashamaka, Balya, Jeevaniya, Rasayana, Medhya*.

Drugs are

1. Ashwagandha (*Withania Somnifera*): It is showing Balya, Brimhana, analgesic, antibacterial, antistress, immunomodulator, immunostimulative, tonic actions.\(^6\)

2. Shatavari (*Asparagus Racemosus*): Vata-Pittahara, Rasayana, Vrishya, uterine tonic; it contains diasogenin which is precursor for the synthesis of progesterone. The unmodified steroid has estrogenic activity and can reduce the level of serum cholesterol.\(^7\)

3. Bala (*Sida Cordifolia*): This plant has Madhura Vipaka, Sheeta Virya, Laghu-Snidhha-Pichilla Guna, Madhura Rasa. So it can be used as a drug for curing menopausal symptoms like hot flushes. It works on Vata-Pitta Dosha and having properties like Balya, Brimhana, Ojavadhaka, cures the Garbhashaya Shathilaya and dysuria.\(^8\)

4. Shatapushpa: This plant has Katu Vipaka, Ushna Virya, Laghu-Ruksha-Teekshhana Guna, Katu-Tikta Rasa. It works on Vata-Kapha Dosha.


6. Brahmi (*Bacopa Monnieri*): major ingredient of Saraswatarishta; It has intellect promoting and anxiolytic activities. It is potent nerve tonic and cardiotonic.

Mootrakrichchhra, Pooyameha, Shukradaurbalya, Garbhashaya Daurbalya, Ajeerna, Dahapradhana Jwara, Pralapa, Daha, Samanya Daurbalya[10]

8. Shankha Bhasma
9. Pravala Pishthi, Kukkutandatvaka Bhasma (Natural calcium supplement) - it is used to treat disorders like Pitta aggravation and calcium deficiency because it has cooling and soothing effect. Calcium is essential for menopausal women.
13. Ashokarishta- It is having Sheeta Virya, Madhya Vipaka, Tridoshashamaka, Rasayana, Vayasthapana, Balya, Medhya, Manasadosahara, Vedanasthapana properties.
14. Saraswatarishta- all the drugs in this formulation are different from one another, having different actions e.g., Medhya, Rasayana, Balya, Dhatupushtikara, Jeevaniya, Agnivardhaka etc. it is having antioxidant, nootropic, adaptogenic, immunomodulatory and intellect promoting properties.
15. Chawyanaprasha.
17. Brahma Rasayana, Medhya Rasayana.
18. Vayasthapana Gana drugs.

Procedures

- **Shirodhara**: This Karma is very fruitful for menopausal women. It is a type of *Parisheka* among *Murdha Taila*. It is preferred treatment to control *Vata*. The region where *Shirodhara* is performed overlies mainly the cortex arterial branches, venous sinuses, superior sagittal and the cavernous venous sinuses. Due to continuous flow of warm oil (*Bala Taila, Dashmoola Taila*) used for *Shirodhara*, there is local vasodilatation and circulation improves. It is considered as the best *Samshodhana Karma* for *Vata*.[11]
- **Sneha Yonipichu**: With *Jatyadi Taila, Dhatykayadi Taila*. It causes strengthening of pelvic floor, prevents vaginal infections and dyspareunia.
- **Panchavalkala Kwatha Yonidhavana**: Removes pathologic microorganisms from the cervicovaginal canal, thus prevents vaginal infections.
Yoga and Pranayama- causes relaxation of mind and body, strengthens the pelvic floor muscles.

- ArdhaHALasana.
- Halasana.
- Shavasana.
- Sarvanagasana.
- Suptabadhakonasana.
- Sheetali, Sheetkari, Mulabandha, Ashwini Mudra.

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