

RASAYANA- A BOON FOR AGING WOMEN IN MENPAUSE INDUCED ASTHIKSHAYA -A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient Science of life deals with the Preventive as well as Curative aspect. *Asthiakshaya* has become the growing health problem in elderly population reaching *Rajonivritti*. The term *Rajonivritti* is not mentioned as disease in classical texts of *Ayurveda*. Yet, according to *Acharya Sushruta* it can be considered under *Swabhavabala pravritta vyadh*^[1] and *Acharya Charaka* said it as '*Swabhavo nishpratikriyaha*^[2]. *Rajonivritti* occurs *Jarawastha*, where *Vata* starts overpowering *Pitta dosha* and leads to *Kshaya* of all *dhatu*^[3]. The Menopausal period is associated with significant increase in the incidence of age related medical conditions like Cardiovascular diseases and Osteoporosis. *Asthiakshaya* in Menopause is a condition of major health importance because of its association with Fractures. Bone loss is only partially reversible. Hence treatment is aimed at minimizing the bone loss after the age of 40. These diseases cannot be managed with any treatment other than *Shodhana* followed by *Rasayana*.

Keywords: *Asthiakshaya*, Menopause, *Shodhana*, *Rasayana*.

PARYESHANA

Introduction

Woman goes through variable stages in her reproductive life where, Menarche and Menopause are landmarks of it. The lifestyles changes have made occurrence of menarche at an earlier age. Thus more women

reach menopausal age earlier due to used up ovarian reserve and suffer from climacteric symptoms. As the lifespan of women is increasing, approximately one third of her life has to be spent in Menopausal years. Statistical data reveal that

Osteoporotic fractures are four times more common than cardiovascular disease and can lead to permanent disability. It is a major public health problem worldwide associated with morbidity, mortality and socio-economic burden. It is the second most common metabolic bone disease in India^[4]. Low calcium intake which leads to vitamin-D deficiency, early menopause, genetic predisposition, lack of diagnostic facilities and poor knowledge of bone health have contributed towards the high prevalence of Osteoporosis. World Health Organization defines Osteoporosis as "Progressive systemic skeletal disease characterized by low bone mass and micro architectural deterioration of bone tissue, with a consequent increase in bone fragility and susceptibility to fracture".^[5] Low levels of Estrogen causes imbalance in bone reabsorption and remodeling which leads to accelerated bone loss^[6]. It has been presumed that 35% of Postmenopausal women are at risk of developing Osteoporosis. Osteoporotic fractures commonly occur at the spine, hip and wrist joint.

Rajonivritti though a *Swabhavikaawastha* in woman, when it causes discomfort by either interfering with normal functions of mind or body, it needs attention. According to *Acharya Sushrutha*, this phenomenon has been mentioned as *Kshaya* of the *dhatu* which occurs due to *Jarapakwaavastha* of *sharira*. All *Acharyas* have mentioned *Kshaya* of *artava* as a normal physiology, occurring at age of 50 years, owing to *dhatukshaya* (depletion of body tissues) and *Jaraavastha*, in the transitional *kala* from *Pitta* to *Vata* predominance. The commentator Arunadatta has considered this age as a probable one, which is also seen practically.^[7] According to *Acharya Bhela*, *Rajahsrava* starts occurring, once *Dhatuparipurnata* (completion of body tissues) has been attained which explains the reason for absence of *rajahsrava* in *tarunavayah*.^[8] This also explains the importance of *dhatu* (body tissues), especially *Rasadhatu* in formation of *Rajah* and the role of *Rasayana* therapy in *Rajonivritti janya lakshanas*.

Role of *Agni* in the pathogenesis of *Asthi kshaya*^[9]

In the pathogenesis of *Asthi Kshaya* the role of *Jatharagni*, *Bhutagni* and *Dhatwagni* can be explained as follows;

The vitiation of *Jatharagni* leads to improper digestion of the food resulting in the production of *Ama rasa*, which contains very less nutrients or may totally be devoid of nutrients leading to improper nourishment of the *Asthi* resulting in *Asthi kshaya*. The derangement of *Bhutagni* especially *Parthivagni* and *Vavyagni* affects the conversion of heterologous *panchabhautika dravya* to homologous (*Asthi* specific) *panchabhautika dravya* which leads to nutritional deficit resulting in *Asthi kshaya*. The chief function of *Agni* is metabolism and metabolism is comprised of *Upachaya* (anabolism) and *Apachaya* (catabolism). Similarly *Asthi dhatwagni* also has anabolic and catabolic functions. The hypo functioning and hyper functioning of the *upachaya* results in the *kshaya* and *vridhhi* of the *Asthi dhatu* respectively where as, the hypo functioning and

hyper functioning of the *apachaya* part of *Asthi dhatwagni* leads to the *vridhhi* and *kshaya* of the *Asthi dhatu* respectively. Hence the factors which cause the hypo functioning of *Jatharagni* also causes the hypo functioning of *Asthi dhatwagni* and results in improper conversion of *poshaka Asthi dhatu* into *sthayi Asthi dhatu* leading to *Asthi kshaya*. Similarly factors responsible for the hyper functioning of *apachaya*, leads to the *Asthi dhatu dushti* leading to *Asthi kshaya*. Hence to summarize, when anabolic function of *Asthi dhatwagni* becomes *manda* and catabolic function becomes *tikshna*, *Asthi vyaya* (bone resorption) over powers *Asthi utpatti* (bone formation) leading to *Asthi kshaya*. In some cases even though there is hypo functioning of catabolic *dhatwagni* we observe *dhatu kshaya*. This is because of the *dosha prabhava* as explained by *Chakrapani*.

Menopause^[10]

Menopause is a normal, natural event-defined as permanent cessation of menstruation at the end of reproductive life due to loss of ovarian

follicular activity and is usually confirmed when a woman has missed her periods for 6 consecutive months (in the absence of other obvious causes). Menopause occurs on average at age 50.

Stages of Menopause

As the menopausal transition occurs over months and years, menopause is commonly divided into the following two stages:

Perimenopause –

This is the time when women begin experiencing menopausal signs and symptoms, even though they still menstruate. The hormone levels rise and fall unevenly. Perimenopause usually lasts four to five years or longer.

Postmenopause –

Once 6 months have passed since the last period, the woman has reached menopause. Her ovaries produce less estrogen and no progesterone. The years that follow are called postmenopause.

Symptoms

Menopausal symptoms affect 70% of women approaching menopause. The most common symptom affecting

women going through menopause is Hot flashes and Night sweats, other symptoms can include Vaginal dryness, Vaginitis, Cystitis, Urinary incontinence, Digestive disturbances, Weight gain, Hair loss, Headaches, Fatigue, Palpitations, Tachycardia and Loss of Libido. Emotional symptoms can include Insomnia, Irritability, Nervousness, Anxiety and Depression.

***Ayurvedic Management of Asthi Kshaya* in menopause includes:**

1. *Nidana Parivarjana* (Avoidance of etiological factors):

Avoiding the indulgence in the causative factors is of prime importance in *Ayurveda*. The person suffering from *Asthi kshaya* must avoid the excessive indulgence in etiological factors responsible for provocation of *Vata*, vitiation of *Mamsavaha srotas*, *Medovaha*, *Asthivaha srotas*.

2. *Shodhana Chikitsa* (Biopurification):

If the *Rasayana prayoga* is done without *Shodhana* then it seems like dyeing a dirty cloth which does not yield to proper nourishment of *Rasadi dhatus*^[14].

Ama is unique concept of *Ayurveda*. Removing this *Ama* has become more of a priority. Drugs like *Chikrakadi vati*, *Amruthothara kashaya*, *Shaddharana choorna*, *Hingvachadi choorna*, *Agnitundi vati* etc are given for *Aamapacana*.

Basti is considered as *Ardha Chikitsa* among all therapeutic measures in *Ayurveda*^[11]. It is the best known treatment modality used for *Vata* dosha and the vitiated *Doshas* located below the umbilical region. *Pakvashaya* is the place of *Purishadhara Kala* where *Basti* dravya reaches and it is also the main seat of *Vata Dosha* including *Asthi* therefore increased or decreased formation of *Vata* affects all the sites of *Vata* especially *Asthi*. Hence *Purishadhara Kala* is also considered as *Asthidhara Kala*. So it also nourishes the *Asthi dhatu*. While describing management of *Asthi Kshaya*, *Acharya Vagbhata* quoted that *Basti* containing *Ksheer*, *Ghrita* and *Tikta Rasa* should be given.^[12]

Composition of *Tikta Rasa* is *Vayu* and *Akasha Mahabhuta* and as per *Arunadatta*, *Tikta Rasa* has a unique property to maintain the *Kharatva* of

Asthi Dhatu. *Asthi* also has preodominently *Pruthvi*, *Vayu Mahabhuta* so *Tikta Rasa* invariably increases the *Kharatva* in the *Asthi*. *Ksheer* and *Sarpi* has predominantly *Pruthvi*, *Jala Mahabhuta* and *Madhura Rasa*. These properties will check the vitiated *Vata Dosha*. The provocation of *Vata* will result into *Asthi Dhatu Dushti*. *Basti* is the best treatment explained for *Vata Dosha* so the *Tikta Rasa* in combination with *Sneha Dravyas* in the form of *Basti* have a bifold nature i.e it provides sufficient nourishment to the *Asthi Dhatu* as well as balances *Vata Dosha* also.

Snehana provides *Snigdhatva* to the body, liquefies *Dosha* and increases *Kledata* in the body. Like this, it manages *Dosha* and helps in bringing them from *Shakha* to *Koshta*^[13]. *Phala grita*, *Tankasree ghrita*, *Sukhumara ghita*, *Dadimadi ghrita*, *Amrita grita*, *Shatavari ghrita*, *Triphala ghrita* are given for *Snehapana*.

Virechana Karma is considered as a *Shodhana* in the management of *AsthiKshaya*. It is one of the prime treatment modality for *Pitta dosha*. It also has a significant role in mitigation

of *Vata dosha*. It is one of the *Shodhana Karma* advocated prior to administering *Rasayana* and *Vajeekarana*^[14]. *Tivruth lehya*, *Gandharvahastadi taila*, *Eranda taila*, *Aragwadadi kashaya*, *Mishraka sneha* are given for *Virechana*. These act as *Sneha Virechana*, *Srotovishodhana*, *Vayasthapana*, *Balakara*, *Yoni Vishodhaka*.

3. Scope of *Rasayana* in Menopause

Rasayana is a measure of attainment of complete health either physical or mental. The major type of *Rasayana* like *Ajasrika*, *Kamyā* and *Naimittika* prove very good effects on female in menopausal period. *Shatavari*, *Vidari*, and *Kumari* are the drugs that reduce fatigue and vaginal dryness and give a *Rasayana* effect. For psychological symptoms, like irritability, anxiety, or depression, there are very effective drugs like *Brahmi*, *Jyotishmati*, *Shankhapushpi* can be given. All the above mentioned *Rasayana* are *Naimittika* which are taken to cure symptoms produced in the body. The *Kamyā Rasayana* like *Cyavanprasha*, *Brahma Rasayana*, *Triphala Rasayana*,

Shatavari Rasayana can be given. The *Ajasrika Rasayana* in the form of nutritious diet is of most significance. To balance the hormones and reduce the symptoms diet should include plenty of essential minerals, milk, calcium supplements. Organic food and vegetables rich in dietary fibers, antioxidants and phytoestrogens should be used. Phytoestrogens are plant based Estrogen that can mimic the effect of natural Estrogen. Managing stress is one important way to reduce symptoms like fatigue, poor sleep etc. Effective way to relieve stress is to follow *Achara Rasayana*.

4. *Shamana Chikitsa* (Palliative Treatment):

Acharya Sushruta has described the *Chikitsa sutra* of *Asthi kshaya* along with the *Chikitsa* of all 18 types of *kshaya*,

The *dravya* which are of *Swayoni* i.e. similar to the respective *dhatu* are to be used for the treatment of the respective *dhatu kshaya*.^[15] Here, in *Asthi kshaya*, *dravya* similar to *Asthi dhatu* should be used. This is based on the *Samanya Siddhanta*.

Use of *Taruna Asthi* increases the *Asthi dhatu*^[16]. Preparations like

1)*Ajasthi bhasma*, 2)*Kurma prishthasthi bhasma* 3)*Mrigashringa Asthi bhasma* 4)*Asthi bhasma* of other animals etc.

Some of the **Rasoushadhi** used in the treatment of *Asthi kshaya* are;

1)*Pravala bhasma*, 2)*Pravala pishti bhasma*, 3)*Kukkutanda twak bhasma*, 4)*Shankha bhasma*, 5)*Shukti bhasma* and 6)*Kapardika bhasma* etc.

Taila: *Kshirabala taila*, *Chandana bala lakshadi taila*, *Dhanvantara taila*, *Bala guduchyadi taila*, *Balashwagandhadi taila*, *Lakshadi taila*, *Mahalakshadi taila*, *murivenna taila* etc.

Ghrita: *Pancha tikta guggulu ghrita*, *Triphala ghrita*, *Shatavari ghrita*, *Amrita ghrita*, *Patoladi ghrita*, *Mahatiktaka ghrita*, *Pancha tiktaka ghrita*, *Tiktaka ghrita*, *Indukanta ghrita*.

Guggulu Kalpa: Various *Guggulu* formulations mentioned in the treatment of fractures and disorders of *Vata Dosha* can be given to the *Asthi kshaya* patients who suffer from different types of pain. These preparations are: *Abha guggulu*,

Mahayogaraja guggulu, *Lakshadi guggulu*, *Adityapaka guggulu*, *Yogaraja guggulu* etc.

Kshira paka: *Arjuna kshirapaka*, *Ashwagandha kshira Paka*, *Guduchi kshira paka* etc.

Rasayana: *Dwitiya Brahma Rasayana*, *Tritiya Triphala Rasayana*, *Chathurtha Triphala Rasayana*, *Chyavanaprasha Rasayana*, *Shatavari Rasayana*, *Shilajatu Rasayana* etc.

CONCLUSION

Menopause is a phase characterized by a cluster of physical and psychological changes. Sometimes the Menopausal symptoms are so vigorous that can affect the routine life and requires treatment. The Postmenopausal period is associated with significant increase in the incidence of age related medical conditions like cardiovascular diseases, fractures and osteoporosis. *Shodhana* followed by *Rasayana* therapy can be proved efficacious in Menopausal stage providing Symptomatic cure and Preventive as well.

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