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. Asthikshaya 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 vyadhi¹ and Acharya Charaka said it as 'Swabhavo nishpratikriyaha'². Rajonivritti occurs Jarawastha, where Vata starts overpowering Pitta dosha and leads to Kshaya of all dhatus³. The Menopausal period is associated with significant increase in the incidence of age related medical conditions like Cardiovascular diseases and Osteoporosis. Asthikshaya 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: Asthikshaya, Menopause, Shodhana, Rasayana.

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 *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 *apachaya* part of Asthi dhatwagni leads to the *vriddhi* 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 upatti* (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 *dosa 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\(^1\). It is the best known treatment modality used for Vata dosha and the vitiated Doshas located below the umblical 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.\(^2\)

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 predominently 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\(^3\). 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\textsuperscript{[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, Kamya 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 Kamya 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.\textsuperscript{[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\textsuperscript{16}. Preparations like
1) Ajasthi bhasma, 2) Kurma prishthashti 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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