

The role of *Agni* in menopausal transition: an Ayurvedic perspective

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ABSTRACT -

The menopause transition, marking the end of a woman's reproductive phase, is accompanied by a wide range of physiological and psychological changes. From an Ayurvedic perspective, these changes are significantly influenced by Agni, the biological fire responsible for digestion, metabolism, and transformation. Menopause often coincides with a decline or imbalance in Agni, leading to symptoms such as hot flashes, mood swings, insomnia, and digestive disturbances. This paper explores the dynamic interplay between Agni and the dosha shifts, particularly the aggravation of Vata and decline of Pitta, that characterised the menopausal period. Pitta is closely linked to the endocrine system. The fluctuations in estrogen and progesterone levels during perimenopause are governed by Pitta, contributing to symptoms like irritability, mood swings, and hot flashes. The onset of menopause brings Vata qualities like dryness (vaginal dryness, dry skin), irregularity (irregular menstrual cycles), and instability (mood swings, anxiety). These symptoms reflect the increasing influence of Vata Dosha. It also

examines how regulating Agni through diet, lifestyle, and herbal interventions can help mitigate menopausal symptoms and support a smoother transition. Understanding this relationship opens pathways for integrative management strategies. Agni (digestive fire) regulates the body's metabolic activities, which are often imbalanced during perimenopause. Strengthening Agni helps manage fluctuations in metabolism that can lead to weight changes and other symptoms.

Keywords - Agni, Menopause, Doshas

Introduction

In Ayurveda, Agni is an important factor responsible for digestion, metabolism, transformation, and assimilation of food. Agni converts food into energy, which is essential for all the vital functions of our body. Thus, according to Ayurveda, Dehagni is considered the cause of life, complexion, strength, health, nourishment, lustre, oja, teja, and pran.[1] Acharya Charak has mentioned that after the stoppage of Ag-ni's function, an individual may die, and when Agni is sama, that person will be absolutely healthy and lead a long, happy,

healthy life. However, if a person's Agni is vitiated, the entire metabolism in their body will be disturbed, resulting in ill health and disease.[2] According to Acharya Sushruta, there is no other form of Agni in the body except Pitta, and when this Pitta Dosha is vitiated or diminished, the digestion of food material is affected in the same way that combustion of fuel is hindered with diminished or vitiated fire in the external world; both conditions are approached in a similar manner.[3] Menopause is a natural biological transition in a woman's life, marked by the end of her menstrual cycles. It typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and is accompanied by physical, emotional, and hormonal changes.[4] According to WHO, the prevalence of menopausal symptoms was found to be 87.7% in madhyamavasta before the commencement of jara.[5] Menopause is regarded as the natural Vata stage of life, following the Pitta stage of adulthood. The imbalances influence the transition in the three doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), but Vata predominance is particularly significant. Among the five types of Vata, Apan vayu governs menstruation. Symptoms such as dryness, anxiety, insomnia, irregular digestion, and osteoporosis are viewed as expressions of aggravated Vata.[6] Rajonivritti janya lakshan can be compared with the Menopause transition. Rajonivritti janya lakshan is a group of symptoms produced by degenerative changes in the body. All Acharyas have indicated 50 years as the age of Rajonivritti.[7] Degenerative changes are described in Ayurveda as dhatushay janya lakshan, and Vata dominance is also observed during menopausal age.[8] One of the core concepts in understanding health and disease in Ayurveda is Agni the digestive and metabolic fire responsible for all transformative processes in the body. During menopause, Agni plays a critical role in maintaining balance and determining the ease or difficulty of the transition. A strong Agni ensures healthy tissues

(dhatus), robust immunity (ojas), and mental clarity.

AIM

To study the role of agni in menopausal transition according to ayurvedic perspective.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To study in detail about menopause.
- 2) To study in detail about Rajonivritti.
- 3) To study the transition of agni in menopause and perimenopause.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A literature review of various Samhitas, including Charak Samhita and Sushrut Samhita, as well as multiple articles and internet sources, has been conducted. Importance of Agni (digestive and metabolic fire) in maintaining homeostasis. In Ayurveda, Agni is considered the vital force responsible for all bodily transformations, particularly digestion, metabolism, absorption, assimilation, and cellular transformation. Agni refers to the body's ability to digest, absorb, assimilate, and transform food and experiences into energy. According to Ayurveda, 13 types of Agni are explained, among which Jatharagni (digestive fire) is the primary one, playing a central role in digestion, and Dhatvagni in tissue metabolism. Among the thirteen types of Agni as described in classical texts, Jatharagni (the digestive fire located in the stomach) is also responsible for the duration of life, health, colour, ojas, strength of all the bhutagni and dhatvagni. Second is bhutagni, which comes in 5 types and acts after the process of jatharagni. The digestion by bhutagni is called "Sukshma Paka". The third one is dhatvagni, which is of seven types. It digests and transforms nutrients, supplying them to the specific dhatus. This process is also called "Sukshma Paka".[6] Proper functioning of Agni leads to good health, while impaired Agni results in Ama (toxins) and accumulates in the body at

different levels, from the local (gastrointestinal) level to the systemic level.

RESULT

Agni and Menopause the Connection:

Menopause typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and is characterised by the cessation of menstruation due to a decline in ovarian function and hormonal changes. Ayurveda associate's menopause with the Vata phase of life. Impaired Agni leads to menopausal symptoms through Dosha aggravation, Dhatu kshaya (tissue depletion), and Ama formation (toxins).

During this transition:

1. Agni tends to weaken due to ageing and Vata aggravation.
2. Weakening of Agni and subsequent Dhatukshaya result in irregular digestion and metabolism
3. Accumulation of Ama (toxins) can occur, exacerbating menopausal symptoms.
4. Mental and emotional disturbances like anxiety, mood swings, and insomnia can be linked to disturbed Agni.

If Agni is strong and stable during menopause, the transition tends to be smoother, with minimal symptoms. However, if Agni is compromised, it can lead to various disturbances such as:

1. Hot flashes
2. Weight gain
3. Joint pains
4. Digestive issues
5. Emotional instability
6. Osteoporosis
7. Cardiovascular issues.

Thus, balancing and supporting Agni is critical for a healthy menopausal transition.

Role of Agni in Menopause Transition

1. Metabolic Stability: During menopause, hormonal fluctuations can disrupt Agni, leading

to impaired digestion and metabolism. Symptoms

such as bloating, indigestion, weight gain, or loss of appetite are common. A stable Agni helps maintain a balanced metabolism, ensuring proper nourishment of tissues and removal of toxins (Ama).

2. Emotional Balance: Emotional symptoms like irritability, depression, and anxiety often accompany menopause. According to Ayurveda, Sadhaka Pitta (the Agni responsible for emotional processing) needs to be strong to process these emotions healthily. Disturbed Agni can lead to emotional toxicity, contributing to mood swings and mental instability.

3. Bone Health: Bone density often decreases during menopause, leading to conditions like osteoporosis. Proper Agni is essential for the transformation and nourishment of Asthi Dhatu (bone tissue). Weak Agni results in inadequate tissue nutrition and accelerated bone loss.

4. Hormonal Regulation: Although Ayurveda does not directly discuss hormones, it views hormonal balance as the harmonious functioning of Agni, Ojas, and the Dhatu Agni (tissue-specific fires). By maintaining a strong and balanced Agni, the body can adapt better to hormonal changes during menopause.

5. Detoxification: Accumulation of Ama (toxins) due to weak Agni can exacerbate menopausal symptoms, leading to hot flashes, night sweats, and sluggishness. Strengthening Agni aids in detoxification, alleviating the burden on the body's systems and mitigating symptoms.

Changes in Agni During Menopause

1. Decline or imbalance of Agni during menopause.

Dosha imbalance (mainly Vata increase, Pitta instability) → Agni disturbance.

3. Symptoms linked to Agni imbalance: Irregular digestion (bloating, constipation), Metabolic sluggishness (weight gain, fatigue), Hot flashes

and temperature dysregulation (Pitta Agni disruption), Mental fog, anxiety (Vata and Agni disruption)

4. Dhatu Formation and Agni:- Impaired Dhatvagni leads to poor quality Dhatus (tissues), particularly Rasa (plasma) and Shukra (reproductive tissue), which are essential in menopause.

Nidana (Causes) for Agni Dushti in Menopause:-

1. Ageing natural Vata increase
2. Stress and mental strain (Manasika Bhavas)
3. Improper diet (Agni-mandya diet — heavy, dry, processed foods)
4. Lack of Dinacharya and Ritucharya

General Management of Menopause Transition

1. Agni Deepana (Agni-strengthening therapies): Use of Deepana and Pachana herbs (like Trikatu, Chitraka, Pippali)

2. Ahara (diet): Light, warm, nourishing, Agnisupportive food.

3. Rasayana therapy: Ashwagandha, Shatavari, Amalaki for Rasayana and Agni support.

4. Dinacharya: Regular sleep, mild exercise, meditation to stabilise Agni.

5. Panchakarma: Mild detox (like Virechana in Pitta predominant symptoms).

6. Diet and Nutrition:

1. Eat freshly prepared, warm foods that are easy to digest.

2. Favour light, nourishing meals with spices like ginger, cumin, coriander, and turmeric to kindle Agni.

3. Avoid heavy, processed, cold, and stale foods that can suppress your digestive fire, known as Agni.

flaxseeds, soy and sesame seeds.

5. Eat at regular intervals to maintain digestive rhythm.

1. Daily routine (Dinacharya): Following a regular daily schedule stabilises Vata and supports Agni.

2. Gentle exercise: Yoga, walking, helps maintain digestive fire and hormonal balance.

3. Adequate sleep: Deep, restorative sleep rejuvenates Agni and the nervous system.

4. Meditation and Pranayama: Techniques such as Nadi Shodhana (alternate nostril breathing) calm the mind and balance the Agni.

3. Herbal Support Certain Ayurvedic herbs can help kindle Agni and ease menopause symptoms:

1. Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus): Nourishes reproductive tissues and supports hormonal balance.

Strengthens resilience to stress and promotes vitality.

Boosts immunity and supports healthy metabolism. 4. Triphala: Aids digestion and detoxification.

DISCUSSION

The Ayurvedic understanding of Agni as the cornerstone of health provides a unique and comprehensive lens through which the menopausal transition can be examined. Agni, often referred to as the digestive and metabolic fire, plays a vital role not only in the digestion and assimilation of food but also in the transformation of experiences and emotions. During menopause — a Vata-dominant phase of life — the natural decline in reproductive hormones is accompanied by significant physiological, metabolic, and psychological changes. These transitions are understood in Ayurveda to be intricately connected with the state of Agni. As a woman approaches Rajonivritti, or the cessation of menstruation, Agni becomes more vulnerable due to the cumulative effects of ageing, stress, improper diet, and lifestyle disturbances. This weakened or imbalanced Agni (Agni Dushti) leads to the formation of Ama (metabolic toxins), disturbed doshic balance — especially aggravation of Vata and dhatukshaya (tissue depletion), all of which contribute to the manifestation of menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes, joint pain,

emotional instability, and digestive irregularities.

Any vitiation of Vata, especially Apan vayu, may result in symptoms such as vaginal dryness and irregular bleeding. The connection between Agni and tissue formation (Dhatvagni) is particularly critical during menopause. Impaired Agni disrupts the proper transformation and nourishment of Asthi Dhatu (bone tissue), which aligns with modern findings of reduced bone density and osteoporosis post-menopause. Similarly, disturbed Sadhaka Pitta, a subtype of Agni that governs emotional processing, may account for the mood swings, anxiety, and irritability frequently reported by menopausal women. In this context, Ayurveda emphasises strengthening and regulating Agni as the primary therapeutic strategy to ensure a smoother transition. This is achieved through Agni Deepana (igniting the digestive fire), Pachana (removing Ama), appropriate dietary adjustments, Dinacharya (daily regimen), and the use of Rasayana herbs such as

Ashwagandha, Shatavari, and Amalaki. These interventions help maintain homeostasis, regulate metabolism, and support hormonal and emotional balance. Furthermore, Ayurveda perceives menopause not as a pathological condition but as a natural evolutionary milestone that, when managed appropriately, can signal a time of renewal, wisdom, and enhanced vitality. By viewing menopause through the lens of Agni, women are empowered with practical and preventive strategies to navigate this phase with greater ease and well-being. Therefore, incorporating Agni-focused Ayurvedic approaches into menopausal care provides a holistic framework that addresses not only the physical symptoms but also the emotional and psychological aspects of this transition. Furthermore, clinical research that integrates Ayurvedic principles with modern medicine could significantly contribute to the development

of integrative models for managing menopause.

CONCLUSION

In Ayurveda, menopause is not merely a hormonal event but a profound systemic shift requiring a strong and balanced Agni. Supporting Agni through appropriate diet, lifestyle, mental wellness, and herbal therapies can ease the menopausal transition, promoting health, vitality, and graceful ageing. Rather than viewing menopause with fear, Ayurveda teaches us to embrace it as an opportunity for inner growth, wisdom, and renewal — provided the flame of Agni is kept burning bright.

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