

THE ROLE OF CHANDRA NAMASKAR IN MANAGING PHYSIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS OF PERIMENOPAUSE: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Perimenopause signifies a critical transition in a woman's life, connecting her fertile years to the end of menstruation during menopause. Contemporary medical science characterizes perimenopause as a transitional stage defined by hormonal variations, commonly presenting symptoms including hot flushes, night sweats, emotional fluctuations, unpredictable menstrual patterns, and alterations in bone density. These bodily transformations frequently affect a woman's overall quality of life and wellness. The current imperative is to investigate novel approaches for managing perimenopausal symptoms. *Yogic* lifestyle represents a way of living that seeks to enhance physical and mental health through *asana* and *pranayama*. *Yoga* has been employed as a healing modality to attain optimal health and to manage and treat various ailments. Numerous studies have integrated various elements of *Yoga*

into comprehensive *Yoga* sessions to examine their effects on perimenopausal symptoms. *Chandranamaskar*, being among these practices, demonstrates beneficial effects in harmonizing *pitta dosha* and alleviating both physiological and psychological manifestations. By integrating classical *Ayurvedic* knowledge with modern understanding of menopause, this review suggests a comprehensive healthcare approach emphasizing continuous wellness and illness prevention through *yoga*. This extensive research review underscores the encouraging

potential of *Chandranamaskar* as a non-invasive and economical therapeutic option for women striving to attain hormonal balance during perimenopause.

KEYWORDS: Menopause, *Chandranamaskar*, *Rajonivrutti*, perimenopausal symptoms, *yoga*.

INTRODUCTION

Aging is an inescapable, certain, and irreversible biological phenomenon that induces numerous transformations in our physical system. *Vridhawastha*, characterized by predominance of *vata dosha*, presents greater challenges for women as it signifies the *Rajonivrutti kala*, meaning the menopausal phase in a woman's life.^[1] Menopause is typically characterized as the lack of menstrual periods for 12 continuous months or a timespan equivalent to three prior cycles, indicating the conclusion of ovarian function and resulting in the permanent termination of menstruation. This biological stage generally manifests between ages 45 and 55, introducing substantial hormonal alterations. These modifications can trigger diverse symptoms that may affect everyday functioning. The life transitions of menarche and menopause serve pivotal functions in influencing a woman's physical, mental, social, and emotional health. The cluster of symptoms and clinical manifestations experienced throughout this transitional period is termed menopausal syndrome.^[2] In contemporary medical practice, Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is regarded as the principal treatment for managing menopausal health concerns. Although it provides considerable advantages, it is simultaneously linked with severe health complications, including vaginal bleeding, breast malignancy, endometrial malignancy, and gallbladder disorders. Furthermore, psychological fluctuations during menopause may not be adequately addressed through hormonal interventions. Conventional medicine frequently depends on prolonged administration of sedatives, hypnotics, and anxiolytics, which can result in adverse effects such as drowsiness, compromised motor coordination, cognitive impairment, allergic responses, behavioral modifications, and substance dependency. *Ayurveda*, conversely, offers a natural and comprehensive strategy for managing menopausal syndrome without detrimental side effects. This has intensified attention on efficacious and safe therapeutic options for this transitional period.^[2] In *Ayurveda*, menopause is designated as *Rajonivrutti*, and it can be comprehended as *Swabhavika-kalaja-vyadhi*. The therapeutic protocol encompasses treatment modalities aimed at pacifying the aggravated *Vata* and *Pitta Doshas*.^[3]

Yoga is an excellent method to rediscover our capacity to "sense ourselves." *Yoga* is a journey that includes not only physical and mental training but also emotional and spiritual discovery. *Yoga* performs remarkably on the body's interior in addition to sculpting and strengthening the exterior. Extended, slender muscles, enhanced posture, improved respiration, better sleep quality, optimized digestion, enhanced blood flow, a calmed nervous system, and a fortified immune system are all benefits of *yoga* practice. The capacity to direct attention inward and eliminate external disturbances enables the mind to prioritize what truly matters. Meditation and mental discipline cultivation offer healing advantages. *Yoga* is equally an emotional voyage. The objective of *yoga* is to awaken an individual's inherent happiness and finest qualities. Women currently live longer and navigate menopause for a substantial portion of their lives. Consequently, managing their perimenopausal and postmenopausal manifestations requires increased attention. Estrogen therapy possesses its own limitations despite being the most effective treatment for addressing menopausal symptoms. Therefore, *yoga* has been utilized therapeutically to address ailments and foster optimal health. Menopausal symptoms are believed to be selectively influenced by neuro-hormonal mechanisms.^[4] Numerous investigations have been undertaken to examine the impact of *yoga* on menopausal symptoms. *Chandranamaskar* involves a succession of dynamic *yoga* postures executed in a sequential manner accompanied by specific breathing techniques. Various *asanas* in *Chandranamaskar* stimulate the bodily organs, which consequently assist in preventing menopausal symptoms.^[5] Consequently, numerous menopausal women utilize complementary therapeutic approaches to manage their symptoms, and *yoga* ranks among the most frequently employed complementary therapies for addressing menopausal manifestations.^[6]

This extensive review endeavours to examine the role of *Chandranamaskar* in managing the physiological and psychological manifestations of perimenopause.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

All accessible references pertaining to perimenopause, menopause, menopausal syndrome, and *Rajonivrutti* have been gathered from literature sources, *Ayurvedic Samhitas*, *Ayurvedic* textbooks and contemporary medical textbooks, various websites including PubMed, Google Scholar, and the AYUSH Research Portal, and have been critically analyzed.

Pertinent classical and modern references were identified utilizing a systematic review methodology, prioritizing sources that establish the theoretical and clinical significance of

Chandranamaskar in addressing the physiological and psychological manifestations of perimenopause.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perimenopause encompasses the timeframe directly preceding menopause, characterized by endocrinological, biological, and clinical indicators signalling the approach of menopause, as well as at least the initial year following menopause. It is marked by alterations in menstrual patterns, including lengthened or shortened menstrual intervals, or both. This phase typically persists for 3-5 years or may occur relatively abruptly.^[1]

Modern perspective on menopause

Menopause is defined by the permanent termination of ovarian function, resulting in the complete cessation of menstruation. It generally occurs between ages 45 and 50, with the mean age being approximately 47 years. The climacteric phase denotes the progressive reduction in ovarian activity. Consequently, the corpus luteum discontinues formation, inhibiting the secretion of progesterone. This produces anovulatory cycles, generating irregular menstrual patterns. Subsequently, the development of Graafian follicles ceases, diminishing estrogen production and causing endometrial atrophy, which eventually leads to amenorrhea. The reduction in estrogen levels prompts a compensatory elevation in Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) and Luteinizing Hormone (LH) through feedback mechanisms from the anterior pituitary gland.^[2]

Clinically, ovarian aging and the subsequent reduction in estrogen and progesterone synthesis are the defining characteristics of menopause. Modifications in the uterus, breasts, urethra, vagina, skin, bone, muscles, blood vessels, and brain transpire alongside this hormonal decline. Several physical transformations observed during menopause may serve as indicators of midlife ailments. An individual's genetic makeup, particular unhealthy lifestyle practices, and other midlife stressors can occasionally interact with fluctuating hormone concentrations and the physiological effects of aging to precipitate health complications.^[4]

Menopausal Symptoms^[2]

- Hot flushes
- Insomnia
- Mood changes
- Vaginal dryness

- Atrophic vaginitis
- Cystitis
- Drying out and thinning out of skin
- Palpitations
- Loss of libido
- Osteoporosis
- Anxiety/Depression

Ayurvedic perspective of menopause

According to *Acharya Sushruta* and other classical references, the age of *Rajonivrutti* is stated to be approximately 50 years, signifying the body's complete transition. Certain specific causative factors are considered influential in the occurrence of *Rajonivrutti*, which are as follows.^[2]

- Swabhava
- Jarapakvasharira due to Kala
- Dhatukshaya
- Effect of Dosha
- Vayu
- Abhighata
- Karma or environment.
- RajastravaTypes

In *Ayurveda*, *Rajonivrutti* is classified into 3 types based on *dosha* predominance.^[1]

1. *Vataj* – symptoms include anxiety, mood fluctuations, pain, vaginal dryness, skin alterations, sensation of coldness, irregular menstrual cycles, insomnia, mild hot flushes, constipation, palpitations, bloating, and joint pain.
2. *Pittaj* – symptoms include hot flushes, irritability, anger, sensation of heat, night sweats, heavy menstrual flow, excessive bleeding, urinary tract infections, skin rashes, and acne.
3. *Kaphaj* – symptoms include weight gain, lethargy, fluid retention, laziness, depression, lack of motivation, and sluggish digestion.

During the menopausal transition, there is a shift from a *Pitta*-dominated to a *Vata*-dominated life stage. Due to this transition, estrogen levels fluctuate throughout the final reproductive years. Therefore, the role of *Pitta* during perimenopause can be understood as follows:

1. Metabolic Alterations: *Pitta Dosha* governs metabolic processes in the body. During perimenopause, metabolic rates may vary, resulting in weight fluctuations, hot flashes, and night sweats. These are direct expressions of *Pitta's* influence.
2. Hormonal Fluctuations: *Pitta* is intimately connected to the endocrine system. The variations in estrogen and progesterone levels during perimenopause are regulated by *Pitta*, contributing to manifestations such as irritability, mood fluctuations, and hot flashes.
3. Emotional and Psychological Effects: *Pitta* also affects mental and emotional states, frequently leading to heightened irritability, anger, and impatience during perimenopause.^[7]

CHANDRANAMASKAR

When examining the historical background, it becomes evident that the concept of seeking lunar energy for rejuvenation is certainly not new. Indeed, *Shiva Samhita*, a 500-year-old tantric text, regarded the moon as the source of immortality. *Chandranamaskar* is an integral component of the *yogic* approach and can be readily incorporated into daily life. The term *chandra* means "moon" and *namaskar* means salutation. The fourteen positions of *Chandranamaskar* correspond to the fourteen lunar phases. The lunar energy flows within *Ida Nadi*. It possesses cool, calming, and creative characteristics. *Ida* represents the negative, introverted, feminine, or mental force responsible for consciousness. Similarly, the lunar *mantras* associated with this practice are those that glorify *Devi*, the female or lunar manifestation of divinity.^[8]

Time of Practice: *Chandranamaskar* is optimally practiced during the evening or at night (on an empty stomach), particularly when the moon is visible, or at dawn during the full moon phase.

Duration: For spiritual advantages, practice 3 to 7 rounds slowly. For physical benefits, practice 3 to 7 rounds at a faster pace.^[8]

Precautions^[8]

1. Prior to commencing *Chandranamaskar*, a few moments should be dedicated to preparing the body and mind.
2. Elderly individuals are advised to avoid excessive exertion.
3. One should refrain from *Chandranamaskar* practice during menstruation and pregnancy.

4. It is not recommended for patients with hypertension, cardiovascular disease, or those who have experienced a stroke or hernia.
5. Individuals with spinal conditions should consult a medical professional before attempting the sequence.
6. Each movement should be executed with ease, awareness, and breath consciousness.
7. Avoid strain.
8. Practice should be slow and mindful.
9. The movements should transition fluidly like a wave from one to the next.
10. It should be performed only 3 to 7 times and not beyond that.
11. Beginners may practice 2 to 3 rounds.
12. Relax in *Shavasana* after completing *Chandranamaskar*.

Positions of Chandranamaskar^[8]

Position 1: PRANAMASANA (Prayer Pose)

Mantra: Om Kameshvaryai Namaha Breathing: Kumbhak (breath retention)

Benefits: Induces introversion, relaxation, and calmness; balances physiology; eases nervous system.

Position 2: HASTA UTTHANASANA (Raised Arms Pose)

Mantra: Om Bhagamalinyai Namaha Breathing: Purak (inhale)

Benefits: Stretches all muscles from ankles to neck; strengthens respiration; increases body height and health.

Position 3: PADAHASTASANA (Hand to Foot Pose)

Mantra: Om Nityaklinnayai Namaha Breathing: Rachak (exhale)

Benefits: Frees passage of apana vayu; purifies sushumna nadi; improves metabolic process

Position 4: ASHWA SANCHALANASANA (Equestrian Pose)

Mantra: Om Bherundayai Namaha Breathing: Purak (inhale)

Benefits: Boosts confidence for intellectual work; relieves muscle pain in thighs, neck, back, knees, calves, and ankles

Position 5: ARDHA CHANDRASANA (Half Moon Pose)

Mantra: Om Vahnivasinyai Namaha Breathing: Purak (inhale)

Benefits: Strengthens abdomen, buttocks, and spine; expands chest and shoulders; improves digestion; reduces anxiety and depression; improves balance and coordination; relieves stress

Position 6: PARVATASANA (Mountain Pose)

Mantra: Om Vajreshvaryai Namaha Breathing: Rachak (exhale)

Benefits: Relieves pain in neck, shoulders, arms, ankles, wrists; stretches muscles from ankles to neck; strengthens respiration; increases body height and health

Position 7: ASHTANGA NAMASKARA (Salute with Eight Parts)

Mantra: Om Dutyai Namaha Breathing: Kumbhak (breath retention)

Benefits: Increases leg stability and hip mobility; encourages correct posture; sharpens brain and mind involvement in activities

Position 8: BHUJANGASANA (Cobra Pose)

Mantra: Om Tvaritayai Namaha Breathing: Purak (inhale)

Benefits: Soothes anger and violent temper; beneficial for kidney and liver function; prevents back problems (especially for sedentary professions)

Position 9: PARVATASANA (Mountain Pose - Repeat)

Mantra: Om Kulasundaryai Namaha Benefits: Same as Position 6

Position 10: ASHWA SANCHALANASANA (Equestrian Pose - Repeat)

Mantra: Om Nityayai Namaha Benefits: Same as Position 4

Position 11: ARDHA CHANDRASANA (Half Moon Pose - Repeat)

Mantra: Om Nilapatakinyai Namaha Benefits: Same as Position 5

Position 12: PADAHASTASANA (Hand to Foot Pose - Repeat)

Mantra: Om Vijayayai Namaha Benefits: Same as Position 3

Position 13: HASTA UTTHANASANA (Raised Arms Pose - Repeat)

Mantra: Om Sarvamangalayai Namaha Benefits: Same as Position 2

Position 14: PRANAMASANA (Prayer Pose - Return)

Mantra: Om Jvalamalinyai Namaha Benefits: Same as Position 1

The physical advantages of the practice include stretching and strengthening the thigh muscles, calves, pelvis, and ankles, primarily targeting the lower body. It also assists in

activating the root *chakra*. Moon salutations are beneficial for individuals experiencing any form of stress. They help balance energy before reaching the point of exhaustion, as it constitutes a calming practice. In the School of Yoga, it is performed with meditation at the beginning and conclusion, offering the option of chanting different *mantras* associated with the lunar energy of each pose. Among the specific health benefits are promoting balance and digestion, toning the spine, expanding the lungs, and opening the Heart *Chakra*. It enhances blood circulation, maintains the abdominal tract in a well-regulated and healthy state, stimulates spinal nerves, stretches leg muscles and back, addresses reproductive ailments, and improves flexibility prior to childbirth. It also relaxes sciatic nerves, boosts confidence, tones pelvic muscles, regulates adrenal gland function, relieves constipation, anger, and sciatica, assists in maintaining bilateral body balance, and cultivates a healthy sense of poise and respect for mind and body. It calms the mind and facilitates the release of stress and anxiety. It cools the entire body and is beneficial for insomnia.^[5]

CONCLUSION

The *Chandranamaskar*, as the name implies, invites practitioners to honour and cultivate the moon's soothing lunar energy, which calms the effects of *Pitta-Vataj* symptoms such as hot flushes, anxiety, and emotional imbalance. It helps replenish vital energy to ensure an active lifestyle that reduces physical strain during menopause. It promotes balance, tones the spine, expands the lungs, and stimulates the *Vishuddhi Chakra*. *Chandranamaskar* incorporates forward and backward bends; this practice actively exercises muscles by stretching and toning every major muscle group in the body, providing improved pelvic strength in aging women. The spine is elongated, allowing enhanced circulation in that region and spinal cord nourishment, along with stimulation of the nerves. Pressure on the abdominal region provides a massaging effect to all internal organs. The forward stretches tend to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, while the backward stretches stimulate the sympathetic nervous system, maintaining balance between energies. This ensures the positive impact of *Chandranamaskar* on the physiological and psychological changes during the perimenopausal period.

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