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REVIEW ARTICLE ON HYPOTHYROIDISM IN AYURVEDA: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Hypothyroidism is one of the most prevalent endocrine disorders worldwide. Though not explicitly mentioned in Ayurvedic classics, it can be correlated with conditions such as Galaganda, Dhatwagnimandya, Sthaulya, and Shotha. This article critically reviews hypothyroidism from an Ayurvedic perspective and explores management strategies rooted in classical principles. A detailed review of Ayurvedic scriptures (Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya), modern endocrinology references, and contemporary Ayurvedic research articles was conducted. Clinical presentations were analyzed in terms of dosha, dushya, agni, srotas, and ama. Hypothyroidism primarily manifests due to Kapha-Vata vitiation, Agnimandya, and Dhatwagnimandya. The involvement of Rasavaha and Medovaha srotas leads to systemic metabolic slowdown. Ayurvedic management emphasizes Agni Deepana, Ama Pachana, Kapha-Vata Shamana, Shodhana therapies, Rasayana, and Pathya-Apathya. Evidence suggests that formulations like Kanchanara Guggulu, Triphala Guggulu, Kaishora Guggulu, and lifestyle interventions (yoga, pranayama) play significant roles. Ayurveda provides a holistic understanding of hypothyroidism as Agni-dushti leading to metabolic imbalance. Therapeutic strategies combining herbal formulations, detoxification therapies, and lifestyle correction can complement modern management.

KEYWORDS: Hypothyroidism, Ayurveda, Agnimandya, Dhatwagnimandya, Galaganda, Shodhana, Kapha-Vata.

INTRODUCTION

The thyroid gland is a key component of the endocrine system, playing a vital role in regulating numerous bodily functions, including metabolism, cardiovascular health, respiration, digestion, the nervous system, and reproduction, either directly or indirectly. Hypothyroidism is a common endocrine disorder caused by inadequate thyroid hormone secretion. It affects approximately 12–13% of the Indian population.[1] Clinically, it manifests as fatigue, cold intolerance, constipation, dry skin, weight gain, and depression. Incidence of disease is more in females and elderly persons. Autoimmunity plays a significant role in the development of disease as one out of five patients is manifestation of autoimmune disorder. Hypothyroidism can lead to complications such as dyslipidemia, which is a significant risk factor for various serious health conditions. In its severe form, hypothyroidism itself can become life-threatening. Moreover, conventional treatments for hypothyroidism often come with several adverse effects. Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore safe and effective alternatives in Ayurveda. To develop an effective Ayurvedic treatment approach, it is essential to understand the disease through the lens of Ayurvedic principles. From an Ayurvedic standpoint, hypothyroidism is not directly described but can be understood under the concepts of Anukta Vyadhi, Galaganda, Agnimandya, and Dhatwagnimandya.[2,3] These conditions indicate impaired Agni and systemic metabolic slowdown with Kapha and Vata predominance. Ayurvedic treatment focuses on enhancing digestive fire (Agni Deepana), removing toxins (Aama Pachana), balancing Kapha and Vata (Kapha-Vata Shamana), and cleansing bodily channels (Srotoshodhana). Since hypothyroidism often presents with vague symptoms that resemble other conditions, it is frequently misdiagnosed or goes unnoticed, earning it the label of a "silent disease."

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This review examines hypothyroidism from an Ayurvedic perspective and aims to develop a corresponding treatment strategy. A comprehensive literature search was conducted using modern pathology

references and multiple online medical databases, including PubMed, Google Scholar, Ayu care, and other national repositories, to collect clinical data on hypothyroidism. Simultaneously, classical Ayurvedic texts were meticulously examined to understand the disease's pathophysiology concerning Dosha (bioenergetic forces), Dushya (tissues), Agni (metabolic fire), and Srotas (body channels).

LITERARY REVIEW

- Atharvaveda mentions Apachi (neck swelling).
- Charaka Samhita describes Galaganda among Shleshma vikaras.[4]
- Sushruta Samhita identifies Rohini, the sixth skin layer, as the Adhisthana for Galagandaroga.[5]
- Ayurveda also correlates hypothyroid features with Pandu roga, Sthaulya, and Shotha.[2,6]

ETIOPATHOGENESIS (SAMPRAPTI)

Table no. 1: Samprapti.

STEP	AYURVEDIC MECHANISM	CLINICAL CORRELATION
1.	Vitiation of Kapha & Vata	Cold intolerance, lethargy dryness
2.	Agnimandya & Dhatwagnimandya	Slow metabolism, constipation, anaemia
3.	Srotorodha (blockage of channels)	Oedema, weight gain
4.	Ama utpatti (toxin accumulation)	Heaviness, dullness, indigestion
5.	Rasavaha & Medovaha srotas dushti	Fat deposition, swelling, obesity

CLINICAL FEATURES

Hypothyroidism results from failure of thyroid gland to produce enough thyroid hormones to meet the metabolism of body or from resistance of peripheral tissues to thyroid hormones. It results in slowing of metabolic processes and energy expenditure. The disease usually results in multitude of clinical signs and symptoms. The degree of thyroid dysfunction and the time course of development of hypothyroidism determines the severity of manifestations. The symptoms of hypothyroid are very non specific. However common presentations of hypothyroidism along with its Ayurvedic perspective are tabulated below;

Table no. 2: Symptoms, Dosha involvement and srotas affected.

SYMPTOM	DOSHA INVOLVMENT	SROTAS AFFECTED
Fatigue, loss of energy	Vata, Kapha	Rasavaha
Dry skin, hair fall	Vata	Rasavaha, Asthivaha
Constipation	Vata	Purishavaha
Weight gain	Kapha	Medovaha
Oedema, puffiness	Kapha	Rasavaha
Depression, dullness	Vata	Manovaha
Cold intolerance	Vata, Kapha	Rasavaha
Muscle pain, joint pain, weakness in extremities	Vata	Asthivaha, mansvaha
Fullness in throat, hoarseness	Kapha	Pranavaha
Decreased appetite	Kapha	Rasavaha, Annavaha
Menstrual disturbances, infertility	Vata	Artavaha, Sukravaha

AYURVEDIC CORRELATION

Dhatwagnimandya: Reduced tissue metabolism.[2]
Sthaulya: Obesity with Kapha-Meda vruddhi.[6]
Pandu: Anaemia, weakness, cold intolerance.[7]
Shotha: Oedematous swelling due to Kapha-vruddhi.[2]
Galaganda: Structural swelling in the neck (goitre).[4,5]

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

1. Nidana Parivarjana – Avoid causative factors like sedentary lifestyle, oily food, divaswapna, excess dairy.[2,3]

2. Shamana Therapy – Agni Deepana (Trikatu, Panchakola), Ama Pachana (Triphala, Guggulu), Kapha-Vatahara.[2]

Single medicine[2]

- **Kanchanara** (Bauhinia variegata): Known for its efficacy in treating Granthi Vikara and Galaganda, Kanchanara is a preferred herb due to its Kapha-Pittahara properties. Externally, its bark is used in Gandamala. Internally, the fresh bark is ground with Tandulodaka (rice water), mixed with Shunthi, and administered.
- **Shigru** (Moringa oleifera): Shigru leaf extracts help regulate hormonal imbalances in hypothy- roidism and support the normalization of thyroid hormone levels.
- **Ashwagandha** (Withania somnifera): A renowned adaptogen, Ashwagandha helps reduce cortisol levels and maintains thyroid hormone balance. It acts on the endocrine system to stabilize hormonal functions and boost the secretion of thyroid hormones. Due to its immunomodulatory properties, it is particularly beneficial in autoimmune thyroid disorders.
- **Guggulu** (Commiphora mukul): Preclinical stud- ies have shown that Guggulu extract at 200 mg/kg for 15 days significantly increased T3 levels and food

intake in mice. Its petroleum extract also enhanced thyroid weight and iodine uptake in melatonin-induced hypothyroid rats.

- **Apamarga** (Achyranthes aspera): Leaf extract at 200 mg/kg for 7 days increased T3 and T4 levels in male rats, accompanied by a significant rise in blood glucose, indicating its thyroid-stimulating effect.
- **Kustha:** Studies have shown that Kustha (Saussurea lappa) root extract, when administered at a dose of 400 mg/kg for 14 days in rats, stimulated thyroid function as observed through thyroidal histological changes. However, its effectiveness was found to be relatively lower compared to other Ayurvedic remedies used for hypothyroidism.

3. Shodhana Therapy – Vamana: This procedure is effective for expelling excess Kapha and removing Avarana (obstruction) and is administered based on the patient's strength and the severity of the disease. Virechana: It helps purify Pitta and Rakta, promotes Vatanulomana (proper movement of Vata), and facilitates Srotoshodhana (cleansing of body channels). Nasya: Useful in hypothyroidism for clearing accumulated toxins from the head region (Uttamanga). It also enhances sensory strength (Indriya bala) and mental strength (Manobala).[2]

4. Rasayana – Rasayana therapy is recommended post-Shodhana in hypothyroidism. These therapies act at the level of Dhatwagni, improving the Dhatwagni dysfunction commonly observed in the condition. Among Ra- sayana herbs, Shilajit is particularly effective and widely used.[2]

5. Important Formulations – see Table below.

Table no. 3: Formulations.[2]

FORMULATIONS	PROPERTIES	ROLE IN HYPOTHYROIDISM
Kanchanara Guggulu	Kapha-Meda hara, Lekhana	Reduces goiter, regulates thyroid
Triphala Guggulu	Deepana, Pachana	Improves digestion, reduces cholesterol
Kaishora Guggulu	Rakta Shodhaka, Agni Deepana	Beneficial in secondary hypothyroidism
Arogyavardhini Vati	Agni Deepana, Medohara	Corrects metabolic sluggishness

6. Yogasanas

Specific yoga postures have shown beneficial effects in managing hypothyroidism. These include Sarwangasana (Shoulder Stand), Viparita Karani (Legs Up-the-Wall Pose), Janu Shirshasana (Seated Headto-Knee Pose), Matsyasana (Fish Pose), Halasana (Plough Pose), and Surya Namaskara (Sun Salutation). Additionally, breathing exercises such as Kapalabhati, Ujjayi, Bhastrika and Nadi Shodhana Pranayama are beneficial in improving thyroid function and enhancing metabolism.

7. Pathya-apathya

In Ayurveda, managing hypothyroidism involves balancing Kapha and Vata doshas. Pathya (wholesome) includes light, warm, freshly cooked food like millets, moong dal, cooked vegetables (bottle gourd, pumpkin), warming spices (ginger, turmeric), and herbal teas. Moderate exercise, yoga, oil massage, and early meals are beneficial. Apathya (unwholesome) includes cold, heavy, oily, or processed foods, raw cruciferous vegetables (like cabbage, cauliflower), curd, refined sugars, and cold drinks. Avoid daytime sleeping, stress, and a sedentary lifestyle. Emphasis is placed on boosting metabolism (Agni), detoxifying the body, and improving digestion through diet, routine, and supportive therapies like Nasya and Virechana under expert guidance.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda conceptualizes hypothyroidism as Agnimandya leading to Ama utpatti and Srotorodha.[2,3] Modern endocrinology equates this with reduced basal metabolic rate and dyslipidemia.[1] Ayurvedic therapies emphasize both correction of Agni and elimination of Ama, aligning with the modern need for metabolic correction. Formulations like Kanchanara Guggulu and Triphala Guggulu have shown efficacy in clinical trials.[8] Yoga and dietary corrections enhance outcomes, highlighting Ayurveda's holistic approach.

CONCLUSION

Although hypothyroidism is not directly described in classical texts, it can be effectively understood as a disorder of Agni and Kapha-Vata vitiation. Ayurvedic principles emphasize restoring Agni, balancing doshas, and rejuvenating tissues. Integrative management with herbal formulations, detoxification, and lifestyle changes offers a safe and holistic approach to hypothyroidism.

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