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RESEARCH ARTICLE

REVISITING HYPOTHYROIDISM THROUGH THE LENS OF AYURVEDA: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

The thyroid gland is a very important Endocrine Gland in our body, after the pituitary gland. The thyroid gland secretes thyroid hormone, which regulates the basic metabolic rate in our body. Now, in this century, hypothyroidism poses a major challenge both in developing and developed countries. In modern science, there is no permanent solution for hypothyroidism and had many adverse effects. So there is an urgent need for safe and effective Ayurvedic management, which need proper understanding of the pathogenesis of hypothyroidism as per the principles of Ayurveda. This review is made with an effort to understand the disease in Ayurvedic perspective. Ayurveda, with its holistic framework, interprets hypothyroidism through the lens of Agni mandya (impaired metabolic fire), Kapha vriddhi (excess Kapha), and Vata Kapha imbalance, correlating with conditions such as Galaganda and Kaphaja Nanatmaja Vyadhi. Classical texts describe interventions aimed at restoring Agni, balancing doshas, and detoxifying the system through Shodhana (biopurification) and Shamana (palliative) therapies. Herbs such as Kanchanara (*Bauhinia variegata*), Guggulu (*Commiphora mukul*), and Punarnava (*Boerhaviadiffusa*), along with formulations like Kanchanara Guggulu, have been traditionally used and studied for their potential thyroid-regulating effects. However, clinical evidence remains fragmented, with limited large-scale, Randomised controlled trials. This review critically evaluates the Ayurvedic understanding of hypothyroidism, therapeutic approaches, and available clinical evidence, highlighting strengths, limitations, and areas requiring further research. Integrative approaches combining Ayurvedic principles with modern endocrinology may offer new insights into sustainable management strategies for hypothyroidism.

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Introduction:-**Role of Agni in Hypothyroidism:-**

According to Ayurveda, the initial and primary metabolism of ingested substances occurs through the movement of the gastrointestinal tract. This movement is regulated by Samana Vayu, Pachaka Pitta, and Kledaka Kapha, which together govern the function of Jatharagni. Jatharagni plays a key role in converting complex, large-molecule substances into simpler, absorbable forms. These simpler molecules are essential for the nourishment of body tissues and cells. The assimilation of these nutrients is regulated by Dhatuagni Paka, which maintains the proper quality and quantity of the Dhatus, the body's fundamental structural components. When Dhatuagni becomes imbalanced, both the function and levels of Dhatus are disturbed. In hypothyroidism, disturbances in Dhatuagni and, to some extent, Bhutagni result in excessive accumulation of Meda Dhatu and degeneration of other tissues. Hormones in the body may be considered representatives of Dhatuagni and Bhutagni. From a modern medical perspective, metabolic activities are regulated by the thyroid gland, while in Ayurveda, all metabolic processes are governed by Agni. Therefore, impaired metabolism can be compared to a vitiated state of Agni. The progressive degenerative changes that lead to disease development are caused by reduced functioning of Jatharagni, which subsequently disrupts Dhatvagni.

Comparison of Ama with Hypothyroidism:-

The pathogenesis of Hypothyroidism revolves around Ama. Dysfunctioning of Jatharagni leads to Dhatuagnimandhya, leading to the formation of Ama. According to Acharya Vagbhata, symptoms of Ama can be correlated with symptoms of Hypothyroidism.⁽²⁾

Srotorodha	Stunted growth, hoarseness of voice
Balbhransha	Delayed developmental milestones, cold intolerance, and mental impairment
Gaurava	Swollen and puffy face, oedematous appearance, bloated face, weight gain
Anil Mudhta	low heart rate, reduced respiratory rate, joint pain, poor concentration
Aalasya	Lethargy, excessive sleepiness
Apakti	Indigestion
Aruchi	Loss of Appetite
Malsanga	Constipation
Klama	Slowed thought process, fatigue

Agnimandya Nidana⁽¹⁾

Atyambu Pana – Drinking water excessively
 Vishama Ashana- Improperly timed food intake.
 Sandharana -Suppression of natural urges
 Swapna Viparyaya – Sleeping during the day, keeping awake at night
 Irshya- Jealousy
 Bhaya – Fear.
 Krodha- Anger
 Lubdha – Confused
 Ruk Nipidita- Suffering from Pain
 DainyaNipidita – Suffering from depression
 Pradvesha Yukta- Aversion to food
 Chinta- Worry
 Shoka- Grief

Pathogenesis (Samprapti) of Hypothyroidism through DhatwagniDushti:-**Impairment of Rasa Dhatwagni:-**

When the metabolic activity of Rasa Dhatu is reduced, the proper absorption and nourishment of subsequent tissues becomes compromised. This leads to inadequate tissue nutrition and manifests clinically as fatigue, pallor, and dryness, which are commonly observed in the early stages of hypothyroidism.³

Impairment of Meda Dhatwagni:-

One of the major features of hypothyroidism is weight gain, which results from excessive formation of Meda Dhatu due to weakened Meda Dhatwagni. Increased conversion of Mamsa Dhatu into Meda, along with impaired transformation into Asthi Dhatu, causes accumulation of adipose tissue and reduced metabolic activity. [4]

Association between Agni and Dhatwagni:-

According to Charaka, the functional efficiency of all Dhatwagnis is regulated by Jatharagni, the principal digestive fire. When Jatharagni is diminished due to Kapha predominance and Ama formation, it suppresses the activity of tissue-level metabolic fires. This leads to a Generalised decline in metabolic processes, which is characteristic of hypothyroidism. [5]

Role of Doshas:-

In hypothyroidism, Kapha and Vata are the primarily affected Doshas. Increased Kapha produces symptoms such as lethargy, cold intolerance, and oedema, while aggravated Vata leads to dryness, weakness, and psychological disturbances. Dhatwagni Mandya serves as a central pathological factor, initiating both Dosha imbalance and Dhatu dysfunction, thereby establishing a self-perpetuating cycle of metabolic impairment.

**Samprapti Ghataka:**

Dosha	Tridosha, predominantly Vata and Kapha
Dushya	All Dhatus, predominantly Rasa and Meda
Agni	Jatharagni and Dhatwagni
Srotas	All Srotas
Srotodushti	Sanga (Obstruction)
Adhithana	Sarva Sharira, especially Kantha Pradesh
Udbhavastana	Amashaya
Rogmarga	Bahya and Abhyantara

Rupa (Clinical Presentation):-

Hypothyroidism results in various signs and symptoms that are similar to symptoms of kapha –vata increment. Kapha symptoms like weight gain, Sluggishness, puffy appearance of the body, loss of Appetite, Hoarseness of voice, etc., and vata symptoms like menstrual disturbances, bradycardia, fatigue, constipation, muscle-joint pain, dry-coarse skin, hairs, etc., are produced due to hypo-functioning of Agni and an increase in kapha-vata.

Symptom	Dosha Involvement	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, Mamsavaha
Fullness in throat, hoarseness	Kapha	Pranavaha
Decreased appetite	Kapha	Rasavaha, Annavaha

Ayurvedic Management of Hypothyroidism:-

1. Nidana Parivarjana,
2. Samshamana Chikitsa
3. Samshodhana Chikitsa
4. Rasayana therapy
5. Yoga Therapy
6. Pathya Apathya

Nidana Parivarjana –

Avoid causative factors such as a sedentary lifestyle, oily foods, Divaswapna, and Excess dairy.

Samshamana Therapy–

Agni Deepana (Trikatu, Panchakola), Ama Pachana (Triphala, Guggulu), Kapha-Vatahara.

Single herbs⁽⁶⁾ and Some Formulations:-

Kanchanara (Bauhinia variegata) - It is well known for its effectiveness in managing Granthi Vikara and Galaganda. It is widely preferred because of its Kapha-Pittahara properties, which help in balancing Kapha and Pitta doshas.⁽⁶⁾

Shigru (Moringa oleifera)- Shigru leaf extracts help in regulating hormonal imbalances associated with hypothyroidism and support the normalisation of thyroid hormone levels.

Ashwagandha (Withaniasomnifera)- It is a well-known adaptogen that helps lower cortisol levels and supports the balance of thyroid hormones. It acts on the endocrine system to regulate hormonal activity and enhance thyroid hormone secretion. Owing to its Immunomodulatory effects, it is especially useful in managing autoimmune thyroid disorders.

Formulation	Properties	Role in Hypothyroidism
Kanchanara Guggulu	Kapha-Medohara, Lekhana	Reduces goitre and helps regulate thyroid function
Triphala Guggulu	Deepana, Pachana	Improves digestion and reduces cholesterol levels
Kaishora Guggulu	Rakta Shodhaka, Agni Deepana	Beneficial in secondary hypothyroidism
Arogyavardhini Vati	Agni Deepana, Medohara	Corrects metabolic sluggishness

Samshodhana 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).

Rasayana Theory—

Rasayana therapy is recommended after Shodhana in cases of hypothyroidism. These therapies work by enhancing Dhatwagni, helping to correct the metabolic dysfunction commonly seen in this condition. Among Rasayana herbs, Shilajitis especially effective and is widely used.

Yoga Therapy:-

Certain yoga postures are helpful in the management of hypothyroidism. These include Sarvangasana (Shoulder Stand), Viparita Karani (Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose), Janu Shirshasana (Seated Head-to-Knee Pose), Matsyasana (Fish Pose), Halasana(Plough Pose), and Surya Namaskara (Sun Salutation). In addition, Pranayama practices such as Kapalabhati, Ujjayi,Bhastrika, and Nadi Shodhana are effective in supporting thyroid function and improving metabolic activity.

Pathya Apathya-

Pathya(wholesome practices) includes consuming light, warm, and freshly prepared foods such as millets, moong dal, cooked vegetables like bottle gourd and pumpkin, along with warming spices like ginger and turmeric and herbal teas.

Apathya (unwholesome practices) involves avoiding cold, heavy, oily, and processed foods, raw cruciferous vegetables such as cabbage and cauliflower, curd, refined sugars, and cold beverages. Daytime sleeping, excessive stress, and a sedentary lifestyle should also be avoided.

Conclusion:-

Hypothyroidism is an endocrine disorder that affects metabolism, and metabolism in Ayurveda is closely linked to Agni. According to the principle of Trividha Bodhya Sangraha, the pathogenesis of hypothyroidism can be understood as DhatwagniMandya–inducedSthaulya, leading to an increase in Medo Dhatu. Therefore, treatment should focus on managing Sthaulya and should primarily have a Medohara (fat-reducing) approach. To enhanceDhatwagni, Sarpi (medicated ghee) is recommended to help correct the underlying pathology. Without improving Dhatwagni, treatment remains incomplete. Hence, Dhatwagniplays a central role both in the development and management of hypothyroidism.

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