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Ayurvedic Understanding of Hypothyroidism as Agnimandya: A Preventive and Therapeutic Approach for NCDs

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Abstract

Background: Non communicable diseases are diseases that not transmissible directly from one person to another & they are of long duration & have slow progression.

Thyroid disorders are by and large *non communicable* and *noninfectious*. Some consequences of certain thyroid disorders are detrimental effects on blood pressure, exacerbation of insulin resistance, atrial fibrillations.

TDs are frequently encountered and worsens the cases of atherosclerosis & diabetes mellitus.

Hypothyroidism is one such thyroid disorder with hypometabolic clinical state resulting from inadequate production of thyroid hormone for prolonged period. According to ayurvedic principles *agni dushti*, *dhatwagni mandya janyavikruti*, *kapha vata dosha vrudhi* & *pitta kshaya* due to *agni mandya* are conditions suggestive of pathologies involved in hypothyroidism.

Aim and Objective: To explore the Ayurvedic understanding and management of hypothyroidism as a metabolic Non-Communicable Disease.

Materials and Methods: A review of classical Ayurvedic texts and modern research literature was conducted to correlate *Agnimandya* and doshic imbalance with the clinical features of hypothyroidism. Management principles including Amapachana, Agnidipana, Vatanulomana, Kapha Shamaka, and Rasayana therapy were analyzed.

Conclusion: Ayurveda provides a holistic approach for managing hypothyroidism through *Agni* restoration, dosha balance, detoxification, and rejuvenation. Classical formulations along with dietary and lifestyle regulation, can help improve metabolism and prevent progression of this NCD.

Keywords: Hypothyroidism, *Agnimandya*, *Agni deepan chikitsa*, NCD.

Introduction

Non communicable diseases are a common cause of morbidity & mortality across the globe. WHO have launched several programs to tackle the risk factors for these diseases. However all these have ignored some very common chronic diseases which also lead to significant morbidity & mortality. So rather on focusing on four main types of NCDs, i.e. (CVD, Cancer, CRDs, Diabetes), the definition of NCD should also encompass other common chronic noninfectious disease like thyroid disorders.

Hypothyroidism is the major endocrine disorder seen in general population. Endocrine system helps to regulate and maintain various body functions by synthesizing and releasing hormones. Thyroid gland produces 3 hormones thyroxine T4, Triiodothyronine T3 & calcitonin. Hypothyroidism is a hypometabolic clinical state resulting from inadequate

production of thyroid hormone for prolonged period. It is most common thyroid disorders in India, affecting one in ten adults [1]. According to principles of Ayurveda hypothyroidism is basically caused due to dysfunctioning of agni. *Hypofunctioning of jatharagni*, which in turn affects dhatvagni eventually brings out pathological sequence & ultimately disease condition developed. Keeping in consideration the doshas, *dhatu*, *concept of agni mandyata*, *sroto avarodha* we can manage the symptoms of hypothyroidism with an effective Ayurvedic management.

Aim and Objectives

This review provides an understanding into the concept of mandagni in hypothyroidism, clinical signs and symptoms and management of Agni in hypothyroidism according to Ayurvedic perspective.

Material and Methods

Literary review of hypothyroidism is collected from Ayurvedic samhita, journals, articles and modern texts.

(च.चि.28/62-63)^[4]

आवृते श्लेष्मणोदाने वैवर्ण्यं वाक्स्वरग्रहः। दौर्बल्यं
गुरुगात्रत्वमरुचिक्षिपोपजायते।

(च.चि.28/224)^[5]

Causes of Hypothyroidism as per Modern

The most common cause of primary hypothyroidism in North America *Hashimotos Thyroiditis* in which the gland is gradually destroyed due to autoimmune reaction resulting in hypothyroidism^[2].

Treatment of hyperthyroidism (over active thyroid gland), goiter & thyroid cancer using radioactive iodine to suppress thyroid function is the second leading cause^[3].

Classification

Primary Hypothyroidism: There are two degrees of primary hypothyroidism:

- Subclinical Hypothyroidism:** defined as a *high serum TSH* concentration in the presence of *normal serum T₄ and T₃* concentrations. Other terms for this condition are mild hypothyroidism, preclinical hypothyroidism, and decreased thyroid reserve.
- Overt Hypothyroidism:** defined as a *high TSH* concentration in the presence of a *low serum T₄* concentration.
- Central Hypothyroidism:** It is rare and is caused due to *failure of TSH and TRH production* due to disease of anterior pituitary (secondary hypothyroidism) or hypothalamus (tertiary hypothyroidism).

Involvement of Agni in Hypothyroidism

Ayurveda has entitled the function of metabolism in the body to Agni. It is substance that brings about transformation in the body processes. In thirteen types of Agnis *Jatharagni* is most important as it influences other Agnis inside a living body. If *Jatharagni* is functioning normally, the *Dhatwagni* also function normally in accordance. If *Jatharagni* is hypoactive, *dhatwagni* also will be hypoactive. This depleted *dhatwagni* will not be capable enough to metabolize the nutrients available at their deposal. There is accumulation of unprocessed food (*Ama*) improperly processed and formed *dhatu* and toxins in the cells of the tissues. *Mandagni* denotes weaker metabolism. Hypothyroidism is also related to low metabolism, in fact a cause of it. Treating weak digestive fire in hypothyroidism will help to disable the continuation of pathogenesis and worsening the symptoms of the disease.

Clinical Manifestation as per Modern

Early symptoms of hypothyroidism are nonspecific and insidious in onset.

A generalized slowing of metabolic processes, weight gain along with fatigue or lethargy, cold intolerance, hair loss, hair becomes coarse & dry, skin becomes coarse, dry & Scaly, hoarse voice, menorrhagia, secondary amenorrhoea etc.

Ayurvedic View

Although, after mere knowledge of disorder pertaining the thyroid gland from view of modern system of medicines, we can't directly correlate in *Ayurveda* as a whole disease yet signs and symptoms which we approach in day-to-day clinical practice can be seen in *Ayurvedic* texts in different manners.

Hypothyroidism vis-a-vis Avaran

शैत्यगौरवशूलानि कट्वाद्युपशयोअधिकम्।
लंघनायासरूक्षोष्णकामिता च कफावृते।

S.N.	Clinical Manifestation of Hypothyroidism	Lakshanas of Kaphavrit Saman And Udanvata
1.	Dry skin, loss of sweating	Aswednam
2.	Loss of appetite	Mandagni
3.	Hoarseness of voice	vakswargrah
4.	Weakness	Dourbalyta
5.	Loss of appetite	Aruchi
6.	Weight gain	Gurugatrata

Doshik Combination Pattern in Hypothyroidism

स्तम्भं शैत्यं च तोदं च जनयत्यनवस्थितम्॥
गौरवं मृदुतामग्नेर्भक्ताश्रद्धां प्रवेपनम्।
नखादीनां च शुक्लत्वं गात्रपारुष्यमेव च॥

(ch.su.17/56)^[6]

S. No.	Clinical manifestation of Hypothyroidism	Lakshanas	Involved Dosha
1.	Cold intolerance	Saityam	Kapha vata vriddha hinapitta (Ca.su.17/56)
2.	Constipation	Malsanga	Vata vriddhi
3.	Weakness	Bal Branhsa & Bala hani	Vata vriddhi,Pitta kshaya (Su.Su.15/18)
4.	Depression	Avasad	Kapha vriddhi (Su.Su.15/18)
5.	Excessive sleep	Atinidra	Kapha vriddhi (AH.Su.11/7)

Symptoms of Ama in Hypothyroidism

स्रोतोवरोध बलभ्रंश गौरावनिल मूढता आलस्यापक्तिनिष्ठिव
मलसंगारुचि क्लमः। (अ.ह.सू.13/23)^[7]

Management of Hypothyroidism

“The management of hypothyroidism is the management of vata and kapha and agni. All of these are responsible for most of the symptoms that are present in hypothyroidism.

The first step in management focuses on *agni* regulation (metabolic correction) and removal of *ama* (toxic metabolites) — both of which correspond to improving metabolic efficiency and reducing oxidative stress, a central theme in NCD management.

- *Dipana* and *Pacana dravyas* like *chitrak*, *trikatu*, *guggulu* enhance metabolism, reduce sluggishness, and clear *ama*.
- *Lekhana dravyas* (thermogenic, fat-reducing herbs) such as *Chitrak* and *Guggulu* help to manage obesity and dyslipidemia, conditions commonly coexisting with hypothyroidism and other NCDs.
- If *Pitta* is aggravated, cooling *Rasayanas* like *guduchi* and *yashtimadhu* are used to protect *Ojas* (vital immunity).

This aligns with NCD prevention strategies focused on

metabolic correction, detoxification, and improving digestive function.

Keeping in consideration the *Doshas & Dhatus*, concept of *Agni-Mandyata*, *Srotovoradha*, we can manage the symptoms of hypothyroidism with an effective *Ayurvedic* management.

- *Shodhana* (*Panchkarma* therapy/purification) particularly *Vaman*, *virechan* and *basti* is indicated. *Acharya Susurta*, advised decoction of *Pippalyadi Gana Dravyas* along with *Panch Lavana* for the *shodhana* purpose.
- To counteract *avaranjanya samprapti*, *Asthapan basti* has specific role which is recommended in *kaphavrita vata*.
- These *Panchakarma* therapies remove accumulated metabolic toxins and restore *Agni*, thus preventing chronic complications—a key NCD control principle emphasizing early metabolic correction.

Shamana Chikitsa is then important after completing *Sodhana* therapies.

- *Kachnar guggulu*, *ashwagandha*, *varun twak*, *shigru patra kashayam* etc have properties of *deepan*, *pachan* and *vata kapha hara*.

Trikatu Churna with honey, *Yava* dipped with *Gomutra* or intake of *Gomutra*, *Mung Yusha* (soup) processed with *Neem-Patr Swarasa* (juice) along with regular use of *Yava* as a dietary recommendation is strongly recommended by *Acharyas*.

- *Ayurvedic* formulatories like *Arogyavardhini Vati*, *Kshar Gutika*, *Chitrikadi Vati*, *Shilajitwadi Vati*, *Agnikumar Rasa*, *Ras-parpati*, *Nityanand Rasa*, *Medohar Gugglu*, *Gandiraristha*, *Punarnavdiristha*, *Phalatrikaristha* *Punarnavadi Kwath*, *Trinpanchmool Kwath*, etc., are few *Ayurvedic* formulations, mentioned in different Classics are effective at various levels in Hypothyroidism.
- *Rasayana* herbs like *Aśvagandhā*, *Shilājī*, *Pippalī* *Rasāyana*, *Brahma Rasāyana*, and *Chyavanprāsa* promote tissue nourishment, strengthen immunity (*Ojas*), and delay degenerative changes. This holistic rejuvenation is parallel to NCD preventive care, which emphasizes long-term vitality, stress adaptation, and reduction in disease recurrence.
- These formulations act on multiple metabolic pathways, supporting the multisystemic approach of NCD management.

Dietary and Life-Style Modifications

- Basic ayurvedic theory suggests that a proper diet and lifestyle ensures proper digestion and this can be created with *dipanas* (digestive spices like cinnamon, fennel, ginger, turmeric, and cardamom) A monodiet of *kitcheree* with *pachanas* (toxic buildup reducing spices/herbs like cumin and ginger) and *lekhanas* (herbs like ginger and black pepper) help with weight loss.
- **Iodine rich foods** such as fish, sea foods, beetroot, kelp, parsley, oatmeal etc. should be taken.
- **Avoid Goitrogenic foods** such as cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, turnips, soybean products, peaches, etc^[8]. Also minimize intake of Caffeine drinks & Smoking.
- Diet should be high in fiber and low in calorie. Heavy, fried food and high sugar diet should be avoided.
- Aerobic exercises should be done regularly (stimulates thyroid gland secretion).
- Sedentary life style should be avoided.
- Physical and emotional stress should be reduced.

Yoga and Pranayama

Yoga and breathing practices complement Ayurvedic management by improving endocrine regulation and stress control — vital components of NCD prevention.

- **Asanas:** *Sarvaṅgasana*, *Matsyasana*, *Halasana*, *Supta vajrasana*, and *Surya namaskara* stimulate the thyroid region.
- **Praṇayamas:** *Ujjayi*, *Anuloma-Viloma*, and *Kapalabhati* improve oxygenation, enhance metabolic rate, and balance the autonomic system.

Yoga thus functions as a non-pharmacological intervention, recognized globally for lifestyle-based NCD management.

Discussion

On the basis of clinical presentation, hypothyroidism in Ayurveda can be correlated with a disorder arising from malfunctioning of *agni* (*agnidushti*). As mentioned by *acharya charaka* — “*Ayu, bala, ārogya, varna, ojas, utsaha, praṇa—all depend upon Jatharagni*” (C.S. Chikitsa 15/3). Hence, any disturbance in *Agni* results in derangement of metabolism and formation of pathological entities like *Ama*. Due to improper dietary habits (*mithya ahara vihara*) and sedentary lifestyle, the *Agnidushti* occurs, leading to formation of *Ama* (undigested or improperly metabolized food) as described by *Acharya Vagbhata* (A.H. Sūtra 13/25). The *sama doṣha lakṣaṇa* such as:

- Obstruction of body channels (*srotorodha*),
- Heaviness in the body (*gurutva*),
- Lassitude (*ālasyam*),
- Loss of appetite (*aruchi*), and
- Reduced strength (*bala hāni*),

Closely resemble the clinical symptoms of hypothyroidism, which include fatigue, lethargy, heaviness, sleepiness, and anorexia. *Acharya vagbhata* has advised that the treatment of *Ama Doṣha* should depend upon the predominance and severity of the involved *doshas*. In hypothyroidism, there is predominance of *Kapha* and *Vata* along with *mandagni*; therefore, *Doṣhavisesh-chikitsa* through *Samśodhana karma*—particularly *Vamana* and *Virechana*—is found beneficial.

Role of Panchakarma

Vamana and *Virechana dravyas* possess properties like *Uṣṇa* (hot), *Tikṣṇa* (sharp), *Sūkṣma* (minute), *Vyavayi* (quickly spreading) and *Vikaśi* (loosening).

- *Vyavayi* guna ensures rapid systemic action.
- *Vikaśi* guna helps in loosening the bonds of *dhatus* (tissue softening).
- *Uṣṇa* guna liquefies and mobilizes accumulated *Doṣhas* (*visyandana karma*).
- *Tikṣṇa* guna helps in cutting through the obstructed channels (*Chedana karma*).

In conditions with *Avaraṇa janya samprapti*, *Acharya Susruta* has recommended *Bhadradi Asthapana Basti* in *Mandagni*, *Kaphaja roga*, *Medoroga*, and *Galganda* (S.S. Chikitsa 35/25), which can also be applied to hypothyroid pathology.

Use of Shamana Dravyas

- *Varuṇa twak* (*Crataeva nurvala*) – possesses *Kapha-vata hara* and *Medohara* properties.
- *Kachnar* (*Bauhinia variegata*) – specifically indicated in

Galganda and *Medoroga*. Often used in combination as *Kachnar Guggulu*, where *Guggulu* (*Commiphora mukul*) acts as a *lekhana* and *agneya* drug, enhancing fat metabolism and correcting *Agni*.

- *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*) – has been reported to support thyroid function and improve cognitive symptoms like forgetfulness.
- *Āśvagandha* (*Withania somnifera*) – a *rasayana* and *adaptogen*, pacifies *Vata-Kapha*, supports *Agni*, and helps manage stress-related endocrine imbalance.
- *Śigru patra kvatha* (*Moringa oleifera*) – *Dipana*, *Pacana*, *Kapha-vata hara*; indicated in *Galganda*, *Śoṭha*, *Apachi*, *Medoroga*, etc.

Thus, management of hypothyroidism in Ayurveda primarily aims at, *Agnidipana* and *amapacana* – by using *Dīpana-Pācana* dravyas, *Kapha-Vata Samana* – to restore metabolic equilibrium, *Rasayana* therapy – to rejuvenate dhātus and strengthen *Agni* and Lifestyle and dietary modifications – following *Agni-bala vardhaka ahara vihara* (light, warm, digestible food; regular physical activity; stress management). Hence, drugs having *deepana*, *pacana*, *lekhana*, and *kapha-śamaka* properties prove effective in hypothyroidism, when administered along with proper *ahara* and *Vihara* regimen.

Conclusion

Hypothyroidism is basically a metabolic disorder with disturbed metabolism at cellular level. *Agni Dushti* (Malfunctioning of Digestive Fire), *Agnimandya* (Low Digestive Fire) is precursor factor of all the diseases resulting in *Ama* (Undigested food) formation. Attempt has been made to describe its pathological condition & symptoms on the basis of *doshik combination pattern*, *dhatwagni mandya* and *concept of kaphaavritta vata*. Thus multifactorial and holistic approach is required in successfully managing the condition of hypothyroidism i.e. drug, diet and regular yogic exercises all together helps in improving thyroid functions in hypothyroidism.

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