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Original Article

ROLE OF PATHYA - APATHYA IN MANAGEMENT OF HYPOTHYROIDISM – AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Pathya is a path of wellbeing, free from diseases. *Pathya* and *apathya* includes materialistic substances and specific regimen which effect the body and mind. In modern concept the occurrence of diseases is mainly due to unhealthy diet and faulty lifestyles. Modernization leads to improper balance and disintegration of health and environment, body, mind and soul leading to lifestyle disorders. Hypothyroidism is one such lifestyle and metabolic disorder which is commonly encountered now a days continuing to pose a major health issue. The commonest cause of hypothyroidism is dietary deficiency of Iodine. As it also responds to stress and stimuli the global incidence of hypothyroidism is more. This article endeavours to put forward the mangement of hypothyroidism according to its *nidana* in *ayurvedic*perspective which would help in understanding the etiopathogenesis of the disease and appropriate management of the disease by following *pathya* and avoiding *apathya*.

KEYWORDS : Apathya, Ayurvedic treatment, Hypothyroidism, Lifestyle, Pathya.

INTRODUCTION

The impact of modernization, western dietary habits, lifestyle and stress has led to alterations in the activities of endocrine system leading to development of metabolic disorders in the body. Hypothyroidism is one such metabolic disorder which is commonly encountered now a days continuing to pose as a major health issue. Hypothyroidism is primary when caused due to pathology of thyroid gland and secondary when the pituitary or thalamus is the cause. As it responds to stress and stimuli the global incidence of hypothyroidism is more. The prevalence of primary hypothyroidism is 1:100 but increases to 5:100 if patients with primary hypothyroidism (normal T4 and raised TSH) are included. The female : male ratio is approximately 6:1¹.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To explain the Role of *Pathya* and *Apathya- ahara, vihara* and *manasika*elements enumerated in ancient *Ayurvedic* texts which will be beneficial in management of Hypothyroidism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical *Ayurvedic* Texts, Research papers and online data are critically reviewed. All the information has been analysed in relation to hypothyroidism management.

HYPOTHYROIDISM

Hypothyroidism is a common endocrine disorder resulting from deficiency of thyroid hormone. It usually is a primary process in which the thyroid gland produces insufficient amounts of thyroid hormone. It can also be secondary – i.e. lack of thyroid hormone secretion due to inadequate secretion of either Thyrotropin or Thyrotropin releasing hormone (TRH) from the hypothalamus (secondary or tertiary hypothyroidism). The patient's presentation may vary from asymptomatic to coma (rarely) with multisystem organ failure (myxoedema coma)².

S.No.	Physiological function	Mode of action	
1.	Oxidative metabolism	Increase O ₂ uptake of all the tissues (except brain, testis)	
2.	Carbohydrate metabolism	Rapid uptake of glucose by cells, enhanced glycolysis, enhanced gluconeogenesis, increased rate of absorption from	
		gastrointestinal tract, increased insulin secretion	
3.	Lipid metabolism	Stimulates lipogenesis and lipolysis	
4.	Protein metabolism	Potent protein anabolic effect	
5.	Vitamin metabolism	Hepatic conversion of carotene to Vit -A	

The basic function of thyroid hormones in the body are enlisted in Table below ³:

The above table reveals that the basic metabolic functions of the body like digestion, absorption, assimilation and metabolism of food are carried out by thyroid gland. Any imbalance in intake of food and nutrients may cause over activity or under activity of thyroid gland. Hence food plays a vital role in occurrence of thyroid disorders.

The normal regular requirement of dietary iodine in hypothyroid patients is 150 mcg⁴. Selenium is also one of the most important micronutrient which helps in immune endocrine function, metabolism and cellular homeostasis. It is present in highest concentrations in thyroid gland⁵.

Concept of Pathya and Apathya.

Patha means path. It can be considered as any path in the body like *srotas* or channels which flow through out the body supplying nutrition to all the *dhatus* which maintains the life⁶. *Pathya* (wholesome) and *Apathya*(unwholesome) include materialistic substances and specific regimes which affect the body and mind. It can also be considered as a path of wellbeing. Following a path of wellbeing will make the body free from diseases. Ayurveda has enumerated various paths of well being in various ayurvedic texts⁷.

Pathya can be*saririka*or *manasika* and can be classified as *Aharajapathya*, *Viharajapathya*and*Manasikapathya*. *Aharajapathya* includes dietary regimen, *viharajaPathya* includes physical activity and lifestyle and *manasikapathya* includes code of conduct. *Pathya* of one person may be *apathya* for another person. So *pathya* always depends on *matra*, *kala*, *samskarakriya*, *jangaladibhumibheda*, *tridosha*, *gurvadigunaavastha*etc⁸.

AHARAJA PATHYA – APATHYA.

As per Taitthareeya Upanishad food is the supreme or *Brahma*. *AcharyaCharaka* emphasizes on importance of food. The healthy state or diseased state of the body are formed by wholesome or unwholesome diet. Highest importance has been given for intake of food at proper time for maintanence of positive health. It is described as one of the *triopasthambas* of life – *ahara*, *nidra* and *brahmacharya*⁹.

Acharyacharaka has enumerated eight factors to consider while taking food like *prakriti*, *karana*, *samyoga*, *rasi*, *desa*, *kala*, *upayogasamstha*, *upabhokta*¹⁰. The duration of food digestion is also specified along with regular conducive diet (*sadaapathya* and apathyaahara) and *bhojana karma*¹¹.

Acharyacharaka has enlisted certain foods as SadaPathyahara in any disease which can also be considered in management of hypothyroidism.

S.No	PathyaAhara	Hypothyroid Diet
1.	Raktasali	Cereals are rich in selenium ¹²
2.	Rohitamatsya	Fish – rich in selenium and iodine ¹²
3.	Saindhava salt	Iodine rich salt is advised
4.	Cow,s milk and Ghee	Cow milk is rich in iodine and selenium ¹³
5.	Rain Water	Iodine rich water. Sea water contains 60ppb of
		iodine concentration. Iodine ends up in surface
		water through rains from evapouration ¹⁴ .
6.	Fat of pig, hen, chuluki fish	Dietary supplement of iodine is also obtained
		from animals fed with iodine rich fodder.

Selenium present in dietary food combats the oxidative stress and metabolism of thyroid hormones¹⁵.

Considering *apathyaahara* as main causative factor for arise of diseasesdifferent types of incompatible food (*viruddhahara*) has also been specified like *desaviruddha*, *kalaviruddha*, *agniviruddha*, *matraviruddha*, *satmyaviruddha*, *sanskaraviruddha*, *viryaviruddha*, *kosthaviruddha*, *avasthaviruddha*, *karma viruddha*, *pariharaviruddha*, *pakaviruddha*, *samyogaviruddha*, *hridviruddha*, *samyogaviruddh*¹⁶.

Viruddhaahara vitiates *agni* - *jataragni*, *bhutagni* anddhatvagni. Agni is paramasukshma and transforms food substances into various forms of energy. Imbalance *agni* leads to *ama* formationleading to *srotorodha* and vitiation of all the *doshas* and *dhatus* disturbing the metabolic processes and supply of proper nutrients to the body which are the causative factors for disease manifestation.

Apathyaahara includes yavaka, masa, river water in rainy season,usara, mustard, beef, meat of young dove, frog, cilicima fish, ghee and milk of sheep, kusumbataila, fat of buffalo, kumbhira, cataka, elephant, nikucha(artocarpus), alba, phanita¹⁷.

American Thyroid Association has certified certain foods like cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower etc belonging to cruciferaceae family, soy bean, alcohol, gluten found in bread, rice etc, excessively fatty and sugary food to cause thyroid disorders. Some agents called Goitrins are found in plants like cabbage, mustard and turnip which is the cause of goiter in cattle and may contribute to endemic goiter in certain iodine deficient regions¹⁸. It is understood that even the apathyaahara enumerated by charaka are also highly fatty like buffalo fat, beef etc and mustard which contain goitrins which cannot be advised to hypothyroid patients.

VIHARAJA PATHYA - APATHYA

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It includes the physical activity and daily regimen to be followed incorporating a healthy life style. Many *ayurvedic* texts have mentioned *dinacharya, rutucharya, nidra, dharaneeya and adharaneeya vega*¹⁹following which helps to improve personel and social hygiene hence improving the quality of life and maintaining a healthy, diseased free life.Charaka has mentioned the importance of physical exercise which brings about lightness, ability to work, stability, resistanceto discomfort and alleviation of dosas²⁰. Asana has been an integral part of Astanga Yoga. CertainAsanas have been postulated particularly for improving the functions of thyroid and pituitary glands like Sirshasana,Suptavajrasana, Matsyasana²¹. Practicing these reduces the symptoms of weight gain, oedema, puffiness, lethargy in Hypothyroidism.Viharajaapathyas like diwaswapna, ratrijagarana,vegadharana²² have been specially mentioned as per Ritu and also Pragnaparadaha (self made mistakes) which are the causative factors for faulty and unhealthy lifestyles causing thyroid gland dysfunctions. Restraining from these keeps the person healthy.

MANASIKA PATHYA - APATHYA

Ayurveda has given a great importance to *Manasswaroopa*. *Manasikapathya* means maintaining a healthy state of mind. A person cannot be completely healthy even though he is physically fit unless his mental health is maintained well.*Ayurvedicacharyas* have formulated certain principles like *Achararasayana, sadvritta, Sadachara*²³along with practice of meditation to prevent psychological disturbances and maintain *indriyabhigraha*(sensory and motor perceptions and control) and *svasyanigraha* (self control) restrain from *chinta* (worrying), *vichara*(thinking) *krodha*(anger) *soka*(grief) etc. Following these helps to lead a stress free life which is a major cause for all kinds of morbidities especially in hypothyroidism.

DISCUSSION

The fundamental treatment principle of *Ayurveda* is *NidanaParivarjana*, avoiding the causative factors like improper *ahara*, *vihara* and *manasikakaranas*, which are the root causes for any disease to occur. The incidence of hypothyroidism may be due to iodine deficit dietary habits, intake of excess goitrogenic diet or diet less in selenium, inactivity of thyroid gland, toxins developed in the body by environmetal pollution or auto immune mechanism. When understanding in *ayurvedic* perspective of managing hypothyroidism emphasis is given on *nidanaparivarjana* i.e. restraining from unhealthy food habits and lifestyles and maintaining a healthy dietary regimen (*pathyaahara*) along with intake of proper amount of iodine in the food, avoiding goitrogenic food substances, incorporating in daily physical activities like exercise and *yogasasanas* postulated in ancient *Ayurvedic* texts avoiding things that causes stress, maintaining proper sleep (*vihara*and*manasikapathya*) and practicing pranayama

which will help remove the thyrotoxins from the body and helps in improving the immune resistance which also helps in improving the autoimmune conditions of thyroid gland. Maintainenceof proper blood circulation to thyroid gland in turn nourishes it with proper nutrient supply which controls the under activity or hyperactivity of thyroid gland.

CONCLUSION

Hypothyroidism is fast emerging lifestyle disorder which leads to metabolic disturbances in the body. Unhealthy dietary habits and lifestyle are the triggering factors of disease manifestation. Along with the intake of medication following principles of *pathya - apathya* postulated in several ancient *ayurvedic* texts leads to maintanence of healthy status of mind , body and soul and also helps in leading a disease free life. Hence it is concluded that adopting strict lifestyle and healthy diet regimen may act as adjuvant in nullifying the adverse effects and also work synergistically with the medications to cure the disease and further prognosis of the disease.

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