



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Ayurveda

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGEMENT OF AUTOIMMUNE DISORDERS THROUGH AYURVEDA

KEY WORDS: Agni, Ama, Dhatupaka, Khavaigunya, Vyadhi, Vyadhimarga

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ABSTRACT

Trividha Bodhya Sangraha, as described by Acharya Charaka, is a fundamental principle that can be effectively applied to understand diseases not explicitly described in the Ayurvedic Samhitas. Agni plays a pivotal role in maintaining health as well as in the development of disease. When Agni becomes either hypoactive or hyperactive, it acts as a primary causative factor for multiple disorders. Agnimandya leads to the production of Ama (undigested metabolic waste), which, when accumulated at systemic and cellular levels, results in various pathological conditions. Conversely, excessive Agni also becomes pathogenic and contributes to disease manifestation. This article compiles and analyses the facts that deranged Agni—either diminished or aggravated—when localized in different Vyadhimargas, leads to the manifestation of various diseases. These pathological processes are correlated with clinical conditions such as Jwara, Vatarakta, Ajeerna, Dhatupaka, Antarvidradhi, and others. Along with the symptomatology, disease-specific Chikitsa has also been discussed in detail.

INTRODUCTION

Autoimmune disorders may be described as self-destructive conditions, as the body's own immune system becomes responsible for tissue damage. These diseases typically involve multiple organs and lack a clearly identifiable etiology, making diagnosis and treatment particularly challenging due to the presence of varied and overlapping symptoms affecting different systems simultaneously.

The prevalence of autoimmune diseases has increased significantly in recent times. Although modern medicine continues to explore etiological factors and definitive treatment modalities, a completely satisfactory explanation or cure has not yet been established.

Ayurveda, the ancient system of medicine, provides a deeper and more comprehensive approach to understanding diseases through its fundamental principles. Disorders not directly mentioned in classical texts are categorized as Anukta Vyadhis. These diseases can be comprehended using the concept of Trividha Bodhya Sangraha described by Acharya Charaka in Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana, Trishothiya Adhyaya. Through the understanding of Vikaraprakriti, Adhisthana, and Samutthana, any disease can be identified and managed appropriately.

Acharya Sushruta, in Sushruta Samhita, Sutrasthana, Aturopakramaniya Adhyaya, emphasizes that no disease can manifest without the involvement of Doshas. Numerous such references across Ayurvedic texts enable the understanding of complex diseases like autoimmune disorders, which pose a serious threat to humanity today.

This article represents a sincere effort to explore the diagnosis and management of autoimmune diseases through Ayurvedic principles. Immunity has been correlated with Bala, which is intrinsically linked to Shleshma and Agni. The pathogenesis of autoimmune diseases can be understood through the classification and dysfunction of Agni (Agni Bheda). Knowledge of Agni, its types, modes of derangement, Khavaigunya, Sthanasamshraya, and disease-specific Ashraya Sthanas enables a deeper understanding of autoimmune disorders.

For effective clinical comprehension, autoimmune diseases should be analyzed based on the site of symptom manifestation, which helps identify the Ashraya Sthana. Additionally, it is essential to determine whether the disease

is Agnimandyanjanita or Atyagnijanita. Once the complete Samprapti is understood, appropriate treatment planning becomes feasible.

Merely identifying a disease is insufficient; formulating a targeted treatment protocol is equally vital. As symptoms arise due to the accumulation of vitiated Doshas and Ama in different Ashrayas, Chikitsa must be tailored according to the site and Dosha predominance.

Review of Literature

Immunity in Ayurveda is described as Vyadhikshamatva, which denotes the body's ability to resist disease and counter foreign elements. Autoimmune diseases arise due to excessive or misdirected immune activity, wherein the protective mechanism itself becomes destructive, ultimately leading to bodily damage.

Ayurvedic Perspective on Autoimmune Diseases

Although classical Ayurvedic texts do not directly mention autoimmune diseases, multiple indirect references help in understanding their pathogenesis, causative factors, bodily effects, and therapeutic approaches. To comprehend these aspects, it is essential to understand the fundamentals of disease manifestation (Vyadhi Utpatti).

Vyadhi,

Various synonyms of Vyadhi highlight different aspects of disease:

Vyadhi: Indicates pain-associated conditions

Aamaya: Suggests the involvement of Ama

Roga: Emphasizes the disease's painful nature

Vikara: Reflects disturbances affecting both body and mind

In Maharogadhyaya of Charaka Samhita, emphasis is placed on thorough disease assessment. Autoimmune diseases, being unknown entities, fall under Anukta Vyadhis, which can be understood and treated using fundamental Ayurvedic principles.

Vyadhi Pariksha

For Ukta Vyadhis, diagnosis is based on Nidanapanchaka:

Nidana: Causative factors

Purvarupa: Premonitory symptoms

Rupa: Manifest symptoms

Upashaya: Therapeutic tests

Samprapti: Pathogenesis from cause to disease

Trividha Bodhya Sangraha

Acharya Charaka emphasized understanding disease based on etiology rather than nomenclature. Diseases not named in Samhitas are classified as Anukta Vyadhis. For these, three diagnostic pillars are outlined:

1. Vikaraprakriti

Doshas act as Samavayi Karana (inseparable cause) of disease. Mild Dosha vitiation causes subclinical symptoms, whereas severe aggravation results in overt disease.

2. Adhisthana

The site of disease manifestation, also known as Rogamarga, classified into:

Koshtha (visceral organs)

Shakha (Dhatu and Twacha)

Marma-Asthi-Sandhi (vital points and joints)

Khavaigunya forms due to past Hetusevana, facilitating Dosha and Ama accumulation.

3. Samutthana

Hetus that cause qualitative or quantitative Dosha imbalance. Deviations from health-maintaining factors described in Shariravichaya Adhyaya lead to disease.

Rogi Pariksha

Disease understanding must be complemented by patient assessment. Various examination methods include:

Trividha Pariksha

Ashtavidha Pariksha

Dashavidha Pariksha

Detailed assessment of Dosha, Bala, Agni, Prakriti, etc.

Immunity correlates with Vyadhikshamatva, which depends on Bala. Bala is influenced by Agni and Shleshma, as stated: "Agnimoolam Balam Poonsa" – Yogaratnakara, "Prakritastu Balam Shleshma" – Charaka

Agni

Agni governs life, strength, immunity, metabolism, and vitality (Charaka Samhita, Chikitsasthana). According to Ashtanga Hridaya, Agni is classified into:

Jatharagni (1)

Saptadhatvagni (7)

Panchamahabhutagni (5)

Arunadatta further states that Agni exists at organ and cellular levels.

DISCUSSION

Agni functions at both macroscopic and cellular levels. Any pathological process, whether systemic or cellular, involves Agni dysfunction. Two major Agni derangements are identified:

Agnimandya

Atyagni

Both play critical roles in autoimmune disease pathogenesis.

Agnimandya and Autoimmune Disease

Improper diet, lifestyle, and mental factors cause Agnimandya, leading to Ama formation. Ama mixes with Doshas and Dhatus, impairing their function and causing disease. Ama symptoms described in Ashtanga Hridaya resemble those seen in autoimmune disorders. Ama accumulates in Khavaigunya sites, affecting multiple systems, explaining the multisystem nature of autoimmune diseases.

Atyagni and Autoimmune Disease

Excessive Agni, especially due to aggravated Pitta and Vata, causes Dhatupaka, wherein body tissues are metabolized. Symptoms described in Bhavaprakasha for Dhatupaka resemble autoimmune manifestations. This self-destruction aligns with the nature of autoimmune diseases.

Management of Autoimmune Diseases

1. Hetuviparita Chikitsa

Avoidance of causative factors (Nidana Parivarjana) is primary treatment. This includes:

Rutushodhana

Avoidance of Strotodushti Hetus

Control of mental stressors

Avoidance of Vegadharana and Udirana

Following Dinacharya and Ritucharya

2. Sthananurupa Chikitsa

Treatment varies according to disease site and Samprapti type.

A. Koshtashrita Chikitsa

Agnimandya: Ajeerna Chikitsa (Langhana, Pachana, Shodhana)

Atyagni: Ghrita-based Pittashamana therapy

B. Shakhashrita Chikitsa

Agnimandya: Jwara Chikitsa principles and Dhatupachakas

Atyagni: Jeerna and Sannipata Jwara Chikitsa using Ksheera and Balya therapy

C. Marma-Asthi-Sandhi Chikitsa

Agnimandya: Ama-Pachana and Vatanulomana with external therapies

Atyagni: Vatarakta management using Raktamokshana and Basti

CONCLUSION

Autoimmune diseases arise from Agni Vaishmya, either hypoactive or hyperactive. Maintaining balanced Agni and Dosha equilibrium is essential for disease prevention and management.

Key Preventive Measures Include:

- Adherence to Dinacharya and Ritucharya
- Avoidance of Vegadharana and Vega Udirana
- Regular practice of Yoga and Pranayama
- Rasayana therapy
- Adravyabhoota Chikitsa (Mantra, Upavasa, mental rejuvenation)
- Balanced body and mind are fundamental to sustained health.

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