



Review Article

YOGIC CLEANSING AND THYROID HEALTH: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF KUNJAL KRIYA IN HYPOTHYROIDISM

Chaudhari A. B<sup>1\*</sup>, Palnitkar M. V<sup>2</sup>, Pawar Y. H<sup>1</sup>

\*1PG Scholar, <sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Swasthviritta and Yoga, Government Ayurved College, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India.

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ABSTRACT

Hypothyroidism is characterized by reduced thyroid production, which leads to metabolic, psychological, and systemic imbalance in the body. *Yogic* cleansing practices (*Shat̥karma*), particularly *Kunjal Kriya* (*Yogic Emesis*), are described as beneficial for balancing *Kapha Dosha* and improving metabolic and endocrine functions. Hence, this review combines the theoretical and scientific evidence about the role of *Kunjal Kriya* in hypothyroidism. **Methods:** Various classical *Yogic* texts, such as *Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita*, and *Ashtang Hrudaya*, were analysed alongside peer-reviewed research articles from PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar, which were collected, compared, and analysed. Also, clinical studies which are related to *Jaldhauti* and hypothyroidism, focusing on metabolic and preventive practices, were systematically examined to assess the potential benefits of *Kunjal Kriya* on hypothyroidism. **Results:** The reviewed literature shows that *Kunjal Kriya* influences thyroid function indirectly with improved communication between the gastric, hypothalamic, and pituitary axes, and enhanced metabolic efficiency. Traditional *Yogic* texts describe its role as decreasing *Kapha Dosha* accumulation and stimulating *Agni*, which may be relevant to the pathophysiology of hypothyroidism. **Discussion:** *Kunjal Kriya* appears to offer potential adjunctive benefits in hypothyroidism management by addressing associated factors like metabolic, digestive, and psychosomatic factors. Though it is effective, Integration of *Kunjal Kriya* should be approached cautiously, under expert supervision, and as a complementary therapy rather than the only treatment for hypothyroidism. **Conclusion:** *Kunjal Kriya* helps as an adjuvant *Yogic* intervention in the management of hypothyroidism. Further experimental and clinical research is needed to validate its role and to develop standardized protocols for safe clinical application.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of hypothyroidism in India is about 11%. A study in 2013 reported an overall prevalence of 10.95 %, including both self-reported and previously undetected cases, according to a study published in the Indian Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism. [1] The prevalence of hypothyroidism in the developed world is about 4-5%, and subclinical hypothyroidism is 4-15%. Females are 10 times more likely to develop hypothyroidism than males.[2]

Hypothyroidism is a condition in which the overall functioning of the thyroid gland is reduced. The risk of metabolic syndrome is increased in this condition. Hypothyroidism can cause hormonal imbalance, weight gain, fatigue, cold intolerance, heart disease, depression, irregular menstrual cycles, infertility, and digestive issues. Currently, there's no cure for hypothyroidism. This condition can be managed with the Hormone replacement therapy. Sometimes, hormonal and genetic factors play a vital role in the development of the underactive thyroid gland, but it is not always genetic.

Hypothyroidism becomes life-threatening if left untreated for a long time. Hypothyroidism affects social life by causing fatigue, mood swings, and low self-esteem, which leads to reduced social interaction. Cognitive issues and physical changes may further

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impact relationships and confidence, often resulting in social withdrawal. *Shatkarma*, the six cleansing techniques in *Yoga*, serve as a practical representation of Ayurvedic principles by purifying the body and promoting internal harmony. These practices support digestive health, mental clarity, and disease prevention - key goals in both *Yoga* and Ayurveda. The six kinds of *kriyas* are *Jaldhauti*, *Basti*, *Neti*, *Trataka*, *Nauli*, and *Kapalbhati*. These are called the six actions. [3]

*Kunjla Kriya*, a *Yogic* cleansing which involves saline water, may support hypothyroidism by improving digestive fire (*Agni*), clearing mucus, and reducing throat congestion - potentially benefiting the thyroid region. It aids in detoxification and can help balance *Kapha Dosha*, which is often aggravated in hypothyroidism.[4] So, this review aims to collect, compile, and critically analyse classical *Yogic* and *Ayurvedic* references which are related to *Kunjla Kriya* and to evaluate its potential role in the management of hypothyroidism. This attempt was made to review information regarding hypothyroidism and the application of *Kunjla Kriya*, from *Yoga* therapy, as a preventive approach in its management. Such an integrative understanding may contribute to the development of evidence-based complementary guidelines, strengthen holistic management strategies, and promote sustainable endocrine and metabolic health among individuals affected by hypothyroidism, a widely prevalent yet often under-recognized lifestyle disorder.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Design

The present work is a systematic narrative review that involves critical compilation and the synthesis of Ayurvedic references along with scientific evidence, in accordance with PRISMA guidelines.

### Data Sources

Different Classical texts of Ayurveda, viz. *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hrudaya* and *Ashtanga Sangraha*, relevant *Nighantus* and commentaries, as well as modern literature sources viz. Indexed journals related to nutrition, haematology, and integrative medicine, review articles and clinical studies on hypothyroidism and nutritional deficiencies, WHO reports, and standard nutrition textbooks, databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar, etc., were critically reviewed, compared and analysed. Key search terms were selected to capture both classical Ayurvedic concepts and modern scientific terminology, including "Ayurveda, *Yogic Kriyas*, *Kunjla*

*Kriya*, holistic health, hypothyroidism. Additionally, references of selected articles were manually screened to identify other potentially relevant studies.

### Search Strategy

Keywords included Ayurveda, *Yogic Kriyas*, *Kunjla Kriya*, Holistic Health and Hypothyroidism.

### Inclusion Criteria

This systematic review includes classical Ayurvedic and *Yogic* texts and their commentaries that describe *Kunjla Kriya* (*Yogic* cleansing procedure), along with published human studies, observational studies, and review articles which are promoting application of *Kunjla Kriya*, especially in hypothyroidism and metabolic syndrome. Articles were included if they provided meaningful insights into the possible mechanisms of action of *Kunjla Kriya* and reported relevant clinical, biochemical, or hormonal outcomes related to thyroid function. All recent and relevant studies aligned with the defined search strategy were included.

### Exclusion Criteria

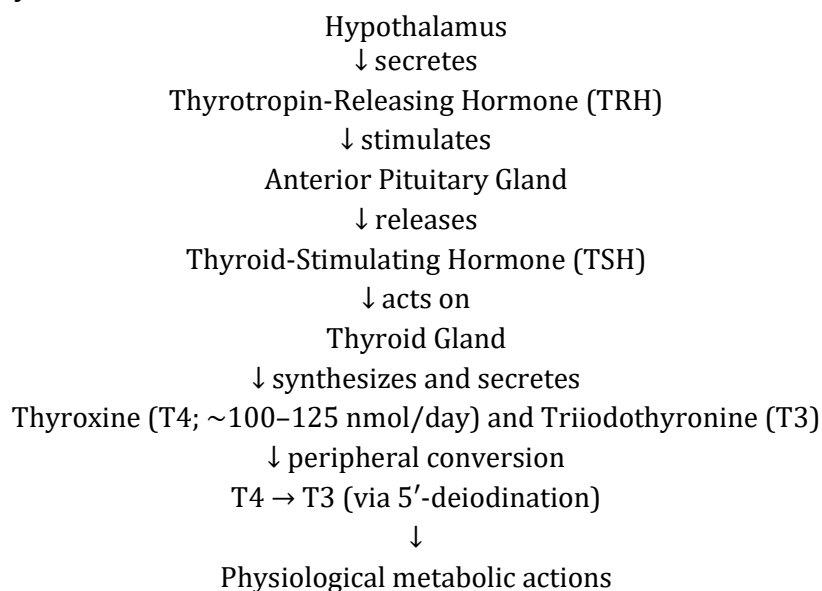
Studies were excluded if they lacked clarity in methodology, focused solely on pharmacological interventions, did not address *Yogic* or lifestyle components, or presented inadequate or incomplete data. While studies not meeting these criteria were excluded from the review. Letters to the editor, conference abstracts without full text, and studies that do not align with Ayurvedic concepts of *Yogic* cleansing or hypothyroidism. Full texts not available or inaccessible, Opinion pieces without a scientific or textual basis.

### Conceptual Framework

#### Fundamentals of Hypothyroidism

When the thyroid gland fails to produce sufficient thyroid hormone, hypothyroidism develops. It leads to an increased risk of metabolic syndrome (slows down the metabolism). Hypothyroidism is a metabolic, endocrine, and lifestyle disorder, sometimes associated with other systemic diseases like obesity, diabetes mellitus, heart diseases, etc. Hypothyroidism is the most common metabolic disorder in India, affecting one in ten adults. Although millions of men experience thyroid dysfunction, women are 10 times more likely to have a thyroid imbalance.[2]

However, less commonly, pituitary and hypothalamic impairment may also result in thyroid dysfunction.

**Pathophysiology of Hypothyroidism**

↪ Negative Feedback Loop T<sub>3</sub> (primarily) and T<sub>4</sub> inhibit the secretion of TRH and TSH

- Disruption at any level (hypothalamus, pituitary, thyroid gland, or peripheral conversion)
- Reduced thyroid hormone availability.
- Development of hypothyroidism.<sup>[5]</sup>

**Table 1.1: Clinical Presentation of Hypothyroidism, Dosha and Srotas Correlation<sup>[6,7,8]</sup>**

S.No.	Clinical Presentation of Hypothyroidism	Dosha Involved	Affected Srotas
1	Fatigue, loss of energy	<i>Vata, Kapha</i>	<i>Rasavaha</i>
2	Lethargy, Sleepiness	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Rasavaha, Manovaha</i>
3	Weight gain	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Medovaha, Rasavaha</i>
4	Decreased Appetite	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Annavaha</i>
5	Cold intolerance	<i>Vata, kapha</i>	<i>Rasavaha, Pranavaha</i>
6	Dry Skin	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Rasavaha, Swedavaha</i>
7	Hair Loss, coarse, brittle and straw-like hair	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Asthivaha, Rasavaha</i>
8	Muscle pain, Joint pain	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Mamsavaha, Asthivaha</i>
9	Dull facial expression, depression, mental impairment, forgetfulness, inability to concentrate	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Manovaha, Majjavaha</i>
10	Slowed movements	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Mamsavaha, Majjavaha</i>
11	Decreased vision, decreased hearing	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Rasavaha</i>
12	Menstrual disturbances, infertility	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Rasavaha Artavavaha, Shukravaha</i>
14	Paraesthesia	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Majjavaha,</i>
15	Hoarseness of voice	<i>Kapha, Vata</i>	<i>Pranavaha, Udakavaha</i>
16	Periorbital puffiness	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Rasavaha, Udakavaha</i>
17	Goitre	<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Rasavaha, Medovaha, Mamsavaha</i>

The higher risk of coma and death may occur when hypothyroidism remained untreated. Severe mental retardation can occur if the hypothyroidism in adolescents remains untreated. The primary cause of death in adults due to hypothyroidism is heart failure. The social life can be affected due to fatigue, mood

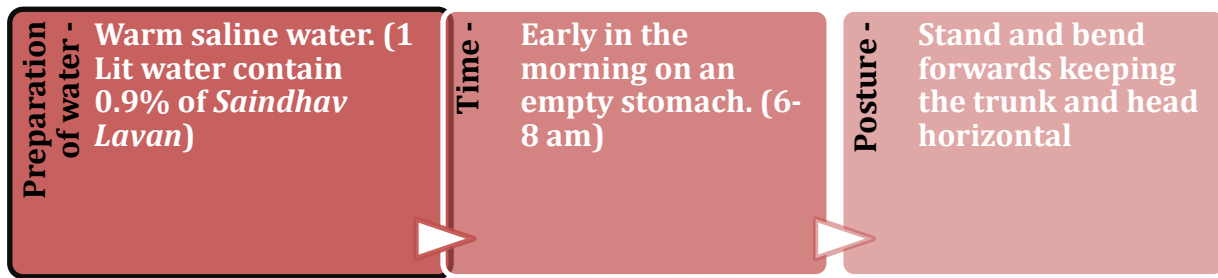
swings, and low self-esteem, which can lead to reduced social interaction. Cognitive issues and physical changes may further impact relationships and confidence, often resulting in social withdrawal. Hereditary factors and acquired genetic changes can increase your risk of developing an underactive

thyroid gland, but hypothyroidism can develop for different reasons, and they may not always be genetic. If hypothyroidism is left untreated for long periods of time, it can become life-threatening. In general, hypothyroidism is very treatable. Currently, there's no cure for hypothyroidism. It can be managed by hormone replacement therapy. An integrative approach can be used to keep this condition stable, i.e., by using some Ayurvedic approaches and the *Yogic Kriya*.

### **Kunjali Kriya (Jaldhauti)<sup>[9]</sup>**

*Shatkarma*, the six cleansing techniques in *Yoga*, serve as a practical representation of *Ayurvedic* principles by purifying the body, balancing *Doshas*, and *Purva Karma*

promoting internal harmony. These practices support digestive health, mental clarity, and disease prevention- key goals in both *Yoga* and *Ayurveda*. *Kunjali Kriya*, a *Yogic* cleansing practice involving warm saline water, may support hypothyroidism by improving digestive fire (*Agni*), clearing mucus, and reducing throat congestion- potentially benefiting the thyroid region. It helps in the detoxification process and balances *Kapha Dosha*, which is often vitiated in hypothyroidism. This technique cleanses the digestive tract. This is primarily done by the administration of emesis/vomiting. The practice is known by various names like *Kunjali Kriya*, *Vaman Dhauti* or *Gajakarni*, *Jaldhauti*.<sup>[9]</sup>



### **Method of Kunjali Kriya (Pradhan Karma)**

*Akanthapana* of warm salty water is drunk to completely fill the stomach in a squatting position Three fingers (*Tarjani*, *Madhyama* and *Anamika*) are used to press the root of the tongue

Stimulate the vomiting reflex

This makes a quick and easy gushing out of the water held in the stomach

*Kunja Kriya* is then done to clear out the intestinal Malabsorption

### **Paschat Karma**

Mouth cavity, teeth, face, hand washed with normal water.



15-20 minutes of *Shavasana*



Light diet. (like *Mung Khichdi*)

**Precautions taken During Jaldhauti**

- Practice only on an empty stomach, preferably early morning.
- Use lukewarm, clean (preferably boiled and cooled) water; avoid hot or cold water.
- Add appropriate salt concentration (about 1 tsp rock salt per liter) to prevent irritation.
- Stop immediately if there is dizziness, nausea, chest discomfort, or excessive gagging.
- Avoid talking, coughing forcefully, or laughing during the procedure.
- After completion, rest for a few minutes and follow with gentle breathing or relaxation.
- Always practice under the guidance of a trained Yoga therapist, especially for beginners.

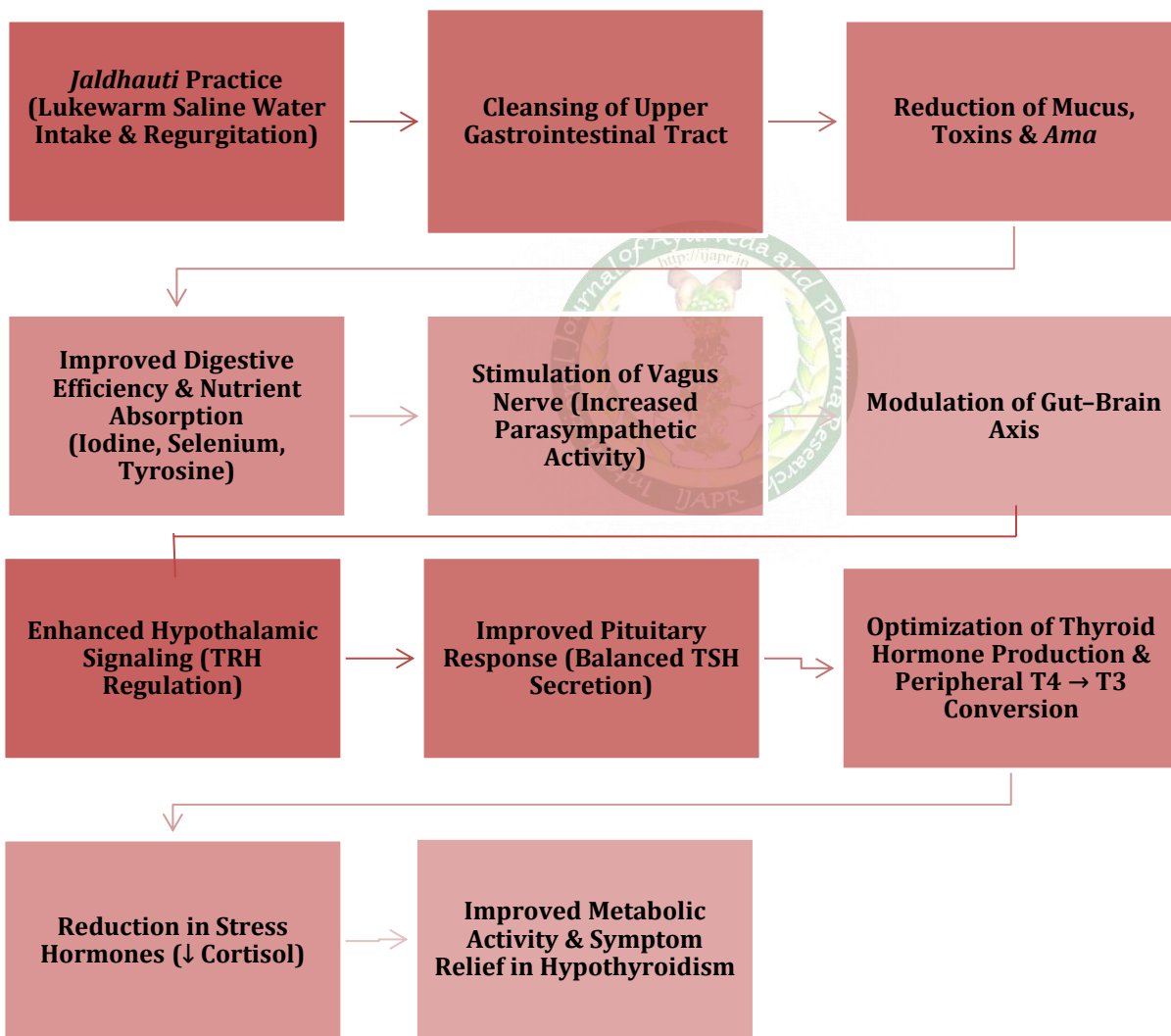
**Contraindications**

- Peptic ulcer, hernia, recent abdominal surgery.
- Severe hypertension or cardiac disorders.
- Pregnancy.
- Active gastric bleeding or severe GERD.

**Role of Saindhava Lavana and Warm Water**

In *Ayurveda*, *Saindhav Lavana* is described as a *Tridoshghna*, *Sukshma*, *Snigdha* and *Laghu*. Due to which it cleanses the nasal mucosa. And also, it reduces the *Vata* and *Kapha* vitiation. Warm water is *Ampachaka*, *Strotoshodhak*, and *Vata-Kapha Shamak*, which improves local circulation, giving quicker mucosal recovery after irritation.

**Probable Mode of action of Jaldhauti**



**DISCUSSION**

Ayurvedic procedures mentioned will help to live healthily; their ultimate aim is not only to get symptomatic relief but also to treat the root cause of the disease. Likewise, in *Kunjal kriya*, the cleansing technique using warm saline water helps expel toxins from the stomach and throat, which makes digestion

better and maintains metabolic balance. In modern medicine, thyroxine is preferred as a treatment. It starts with 12.5mcg/day. Although TSH can be managed with the support of modern medicine, it has many side effects. It leads to terrible pathological harm

to the body and makes the person's survival impossible without hormonal replacement therapy.

Ayurveda approaches hypothyroidism as an imbalance of the *Kapha* and *Vata Doshas*, focusing on restoring metabolic fire (*Jatharagni*) through herbal remedies, diet, lifestyle changes, and *Yogic Shuddhikriyas* that help regulate thyroid function and improve overall vitality.<sup>[5]</sup>

*Yogic Shuddhikriyas* plays a supportive role in managing hypothyroidism by cleansing the body, stimulating the endocrine system, and balancing doshas. and gently stimulate thyroid function, contributing to hormonal balance and improving metabolism.

*Kunjla Kriya*, a *Yogic* cleansing technique, helps to remove *Dosha* from the stomach and throat, aiding in better digestion and metabolic balance. By

stimulating the digestive fire (*Agni*) and reducing *Kapha* buildup, it may support thyroid function and relieve symptoms of hypothyroidism naturally.

Hypothyroidism is not directly mentioned in Ayurvedic classics. But it can be correlated with many conditions. Many *Acharyas* like *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, *Vagbhata*, described *Gandmala*, *Galagand* like *Vyadhi* in *Kanharoga*.<sup>[5]</sup>

Thyroid is an endocrine gland situated at the roof of the neck on either side of the trachea.

In Ayurveda, *Kantha Sthana* (neck region) is the site of *Prana Vayu*, *Udana Vayu* and *Kapha Dosha*.

According to *Acharya Vagbhata*, if we don't know the name of the disease, then *Vaidya* should treat that patient based on examination of *Prakriti*, *Hetu*, *Dosha- Dushya Dushti*, *Sroto-Dushti*, etc.

**Table 2: Samprapti Ghatakas and Dosha Correlation** <sup>[13,14,15]</sup>

Samprapti Ghatakas	Dosha
Dosha	Vata-Kapha
Dushya	Rasa, Rakta, Mansa, Meda, Asthi, Shukra
Agni	Jatharagnimandya, Dhatwagnimandya
Srotodushti	Sanga, Vimargagamana
Rogamarga	Bahya, Abhyantara, Madhyama

When the pathogenesis and symptoms of hypothyroidism are translated into Ayurvedic terms it can be understood on the basis of following conditions

1. *Udanavrita Samana*
2. *Kaphavrita Udana*
3. Pathological increase of *Kapha*
4. *Agnimandya*<sup>[5]</sup>

#### **Udanavrita Samana**

*Kunja Kriya* clears the stomach and upper digestive tract and supports healthy upward side movement of *Udana Vayu* in the chest, neck, and the region of the thyroid gland.

#### **Kaphavrita Udana**

*Kunjla Kriya* plays a therapeutic role. Cleansing the upper gastrointestinal tract and throat region, it helps remove mucus and *Kapha* buildup, restoring *Udana's* free movement. This cleansing action may help relieve congestion, enhance *Udana Vayu* function, and indirectly support thyroid hormone regulation by stimulating throat and digestive energy flow.

#### **Agnimandya and pathological increase of Kapha**

*Kunjla Kriya* plays a cleansing and stimulating role by flushing out *Doshas* and undigested food (*Ama*) from the stomach, and it helps to restore *Jatharagni* (digestive fire).

In *Dhatvagnimandya* (weakened metabolic activity at the tissue level), *Kunjla Kriya* serves as a preparatory and supportive practice. By cleansing the

stomach and enhancing *Jatharagni* (primary digestive fire), it improves the initial stages of digestion and assimilation, which directly impacts the strength of *Dhatwagnis* (metabolic fires in body tissues). This helps prevent the formation of *Ama* (toxins) and supports proper *Dhatu* (tissue) nourishment, indirectly restoring balance and vitality at the cellular level.

This practice clears the gastrointestinal tract, reduces *Kapha* buildup, and enhances digestion, thereby restoring proper metabolism and helping to balance the symptoms of hypothyroidism and supporting overall health in line with Ayurvedic principles.

#### **CONCLUSION**

*Yogic Shuddhikriyas* and Ayurvedic interventions offer a holistic view for managing hypothyroidism by removing root causes of imbalance rather than merely alleviating symptoms. Ayurveda and *Yogic Shuddhikriya* promote detoxification and internal harmony, which can reduce dependency on synthetic hormones. So, making *Yogic* and Ayurvedic practices can improve the quality of life, energy levels, mental clarity, and thyroid health in individuals with hypothyroidism.

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**\*Address for correspondence**

**Dr. Chaudhari A. B**

PG Scholar,

Department of Swasthvritta and Yoga,  
Government Ayurved College,  
Nagpur. Maharashtra, India.

Email:

[akankshachaudhari15@gmail.com](mailto:akankshachaudhari15@gmail.com)

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