

OBESITY (STHAULYA) AND ITS AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Obesity is the most common metabolic disorder in affluent societies caused by excessive eating. Lack of exercise is a direct result of the modernization combined with life style changes. Consequently, over consumption of calories and reduced physical activity is the root cause of obesity. Obesity may lead to serious health related complication. Obesity is a medical condition in which excess body fat has accumulated to the extent that it may have an adverse effect on health, leading to reduced life expectancy and/or increased health problems. In *Ayurveda Acharya Charaka* has described *Ashta Nindita Purusha* and emphasized in detail about two pathological conditions viz *Atisthula* and *Atikarshya*. *Atisthulapurusha* is worst among them, due to its complicated pathogenesis, variable complication and treatment. Obesity has been described as *Sthaulya* or *Medoroga* also in *Ayurvedic* texts. It is described under the caption of *Santarpanotha Vikara* (Disease caused by over nourishment). *Ayurvedic* classics give sufficient focus on obesity (*Sthaulya* or *Medoroga*) and advise diet and drugs to control the disease. Non communicable diseases currently cause almost two thirds of all deaths worldwide. It is one of them. The basic principles of treatment of *Sthaulya* (Obesity) as described in *Ayurvedic* classics are *Nidanaparivarjana*, *Apatarpanachikitsa* and *Samana & Shodhan-chikitsa* are used in the management of obesity.

Keyword: *Ayurveda*, *Sthaulya*, Obesity, and *Ayurvedic* management.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is most ancient of medical sciences. *Ayurveda* stands apart from the rest of medical fraternity with its holistic approach to disease management on basis of five elements (*Panchamahabhutas*) and then we constitute the *Tridoshas* that governs our health. *Sthau-*

lya (Obesity) is one among the major diseases of Modern era. Present day, everyone is in mental and physical stress due to their modern living lifestyle, undisciplined to pursue the daily regimen, dietetic rules and regulations, which result in many diseases as hypertension,

diabetic mellitus, obesity, osteoarthritis, cardiac diseases, depression, respiratory disease, impotency etc. Among this lifestyle induced diseases like obesity (*sthoulya*) is one of them. These are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in developed and developing countries and leading health problems in India also. Obesity is a metabolic disorder, generally occurring in affluent societies, because of imbalance between energy intake and energy expenditure. Obesity is an abnormal growth of the adipose tissue due to an enlargement of fat cell size or an increase in fat cell number or a combination of both. Obesity is a state of excess adipose tissue mass. "Overweight" refers to an excessive amount of body weight that includes muscle, bone, fat, and water¹. According to survey by Nutrition Foundation of India, 45 % of women and 29% of men in urban area of the country are overweight. India is in 7th place in terms of obesity index². In *Ayurveda Acharya Charaka* has described *Ash-taNinditaPurusha* and emphasized in detail

about two pathological conditions viz *Atisthula* and *Atikarshya*. *Atisthulapurusha* is worst among them, due to its complicated pathogenesis, variable complication and treatment. Obesity has been described as *Sthaulya* or *Medoroga* also in *Ayurvedic* texts. It is described under the caption of *SantarpanotthaVikara* (Disease caused by over nourishment). *Ayurveda* has given more emphasis on balanced state of body tissues while mentioning definition of health. According to *Ayurveda*, Obesity is a condition in which *Medodhatu* (Fatty Tissue) is in a state of *VikritaVridhhi* (Abnormal increase). There are several definitions and classifications for degrees of obesity. The most widely accepted classification is that of the World health organization (WHO), based on Body Mass Index (BMI). The BMI is being defined as the weight of the individual (in Kgs.) being divided by the square of the height (in meters). It estimates the ideal weight of the individual based on their height and size³.

Table 1: BMI Values and Classification of Obesity Acc. WHO

Classification	BMI(Kg/M ²)
Underweight	<18.5
Normal Range	18.5-24.9
Overweight(pre-obese)	25.0-29.9
Obese	30.0
Class i obesity	30.0-34.9
Class ii obesity	35.0-39.9
Class iii obesity	40.0

Class iii obesity is further classified into more descriptive subgroups.

- Sever obesity – BMI > 35 Kg/m²
- Morbid obesity – BMI >40 Kg/m²

- Super obese – BMI > 50 Kg/m²
- Super-super obese – BMI >60 Kg/m²

Etiological factors in Ayurveda with modern correlates:-

Obesity is a condition of the body, characterised by over-accumulation of fat under the skin and around certain internal organs. Excessive weight gain is caused when people consume more calories than the body needs—occurring most commonly due to eating a diet high in fat and calories, being sedentary, or both. There are many other factors causing obesity such as pregnancy, tumors as well as endocrine disorders and medications that include psychotic drugs, oestrogens, corticosteroids and insulin.

Sthaulya is the Ayurvedic term for it. It is often referred to as *Medoroga*, as the *Meda* or fat is the main cause for this condition. In our ancient texts of *Ayurveda*, an elaborate description has been given relating to the causes of *Sthoulya* (obesity). *Sushruta* has considered that *Rasa Dhathu* is the main culprit for both obesity and emaciation-*Rasa Nimittamevast-haulyamkarshyam cha*.⁴

Both *Ayurveda* and conventional system of medicine have considered obesity as multifactorial disorder. The most common etiological factors of obesity are given below.⁵

Table 2: Ayurvedic factors of obesity correlates with modern

Ayurvedic Factors	Modern Correlates
No exercise (<i>Avyayama</i>)	Lack of exercise
Dense food (<i>SleshmalAahara</i>)	Fattening diet and foods
Daytime sleeping (<i>Diva svapna</i>)	Obesity sleep apnoea
No sexual intercourse (<i>Avyavaya</i>)	Difficulty in intercourse
No anxiety (<i>Achinta</i>)	Affect disorders
Genetic (<i>Beeja-dosha</i>)	Genetic factors
Prodromal signs (<i>Prameha-poorvarupa</i>)	Features of Hyperinsulinemia
Loss of appetite (<i>Agnimandya</i>)	Low energy expenditure
Lipotoxicity(<i>Medavrittavayu</i>)	Defective satiety cascade
Lack of restraint (<i>Ahara-asamyama</i>)	Environmental food clues
Tissue indigestion (<i>Dhatvagnimandata</i>)	Stress and hormones

Pathogenesis of Obesity According to Ayurveda:-

In *Ayurveda*, Abnormal composition of *Medodhatu* considered as *Medodosha* & subsequently as *Medoroga*. Derangement of *Agni* or digestive power leads to production of *Ama*, which disturbs *Dhatvagni* of *Medodhatu* & blocks the proper formation of further *Dhatu*. Improperly formed *Medodhatu* accumulates in the body causing *Sthaulyaroga*. Accumulated

Medo cause disturbance to the action of *Vata*, which cause increased appetite, due to *Chala-Guna* of *Vata*, patients therefore eat more & the entire food is abnormally converted into *Medodhatu*.⁶

Symptoms⁷

1. *AtiShevida*[Excessive Sweating]
2. *SharamjanyaSwasa*[Breathlessness on mild exertion]

3. *AatiNindra*[Excessive sleep]
4. *KaryaDorblyta* [Difficulty to perform heavy work]
5. *Jadyatha*[Stuggishness]
6. *Alpaayu*[Short life span]
7. *Alpabala*[Decreased bony strength]
8. *Uathashahani*[Inertness]
9. *SharirDurgandhta*[Foul odour of the body]
10. *Gadgadtava*[Unclear voice]
11. *Kshudhavridhi*[Excessive hunger]
12. *AtiTrishna*[Excessive thirst]

Eight consequences of *Sthaulya* as described in *CharakSamhita*⁸:-

- Reduced life span,
- Laziness,
- Difficulty in sex,
- Weakness instead of having good weight,
- Smelling body and perspiration,
- increased appetite
- Thirst

Complication⁹

1. *Visarpa*[Erysepellas]
2. *Bhagandara*[Fistula in Ano]
3. *Jwara*[fever]
4. *Aatisar*[Diarrhoea]
5. *Prameha*[Diabetes]
6. *Arsha*[Piles]
7. *Shlipada*[Filariasis]
8. *Apachi*[Alands]
9. *Kamla*[Jaundice]

Reason for using *Ayurvedic* drug:

The Probable Reasons for Obese Person to Prefer Herbal Products for Weight Management:-

- (1) Health benefits of weight loss without any side effects,
- (2) Less demanding than accepted lifestyle changes, such as exercise and diet,
- (3) Easily available without a prescription,
- (4) More easily accepted than a professional consultation with a physician or a nutritionist and 100% natural origin and perception that natural means safe.¹⁰

Herbal plants for weight reduction may be effective in the treatment of obesity and associated disorders. Consistent and safe herbal product for weight reduction is a need of developed and developing countries. In our literature survey, herbal plants showed potential effects on weight control. However, for the majority of products, more data are needed to assess the suitability as an anti obesity plants.

Sthaulya Chikitsa (Ayurvedic Management of Obesity):-

Management of Obesity in *Ayurveda* emphasizes the holistic care and treatment in any disease. Spiritual, psychological, and physical, these all the three aspects are given importance in the management of disease. Minimal intake of food and exceed expenditure of energy would be the basic rule to get rid of the obesity. Now a day *Ayurvedic* management is recognized as the better option for those whom are suffering from *sthoulya* (obesity).

NidanParivarjan:-

The first line of treatment of Obesity is to avoid the causative factors.

Shodhana:-

All Obese patients with *AdhikaDosha* (Increased *Dosha*) and *AdhikaBala* (More strength) should be treated with *Shodhana* therapy including *Vamana* (Medicated Emesis), *Virechana* (Medicated Purgation), etc.¹¹Being a syndromic condition, *Shodhana* therapy is highly recommended for Obese patients possessing stamina and strength.¹²*Ruksha*, *Ushna*, *TiktaBasti* (Enema containing dry, hot and bitter drugs) are also suggested by *Charaka*.¹³*RukshaUdvartana* (Dry powder massage) is the *BahyaShodhana* (External therapy) indicated for the management of Obesity.¹⁴

Shamana:-

Among the *Shat Upakramas*, *Langhana* and *Rukshana* can be administered in them.¹⁵Alleviation of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* specially *SamanaVayu*, *Pachaka Pitta* and *KledakaKapha* (Biohumors) along with reduction of *Medodhatu* by increasing *Medodhatvagni* is the main goal of treatment of Obesity. Administration of *Guru* and *Apatarpana* articles which possess additional *Vata-Kapha* (Alleviating *Vata-Kapha-Meda*) properties is considered as an ideal for *Sanshaman* therapy.¹⁶ In *AshtangaSamgraha* usage of *Laghu* (Light), *Ushna* (Hot), *Ruksha* (Dry), *Tikshna* (Sharp) etc. are suggested for Obesity management as they possess *Medonashaka*, *Kaphanashaka* and *Sthaulyahara* actions.¹⁷*Lekhaniya* (Drugs having scrapping action) *Dashemani* (Ten) *Gana* (Group) mentioned by *Charaka* can be useful in managing obesity.¹⁸

Therefore following line of treatment should be followed.

- ❖ **Vyayama**-Regular exercises like brisk walking, running and swimming in the morning hours for the duration of 30- 45 minutes and this duration should be extended day by day as possible.
- ❖ **Yoga**-Some of the asana and *Pranayaam* such as *Paschimottanasana* (the back stretching pose) *Bhujangasana* (the cobra pose), *Pavanmuktasan* (the wind releasing pose) are helpful in the reduction of body fat.
- ❖ **Ahara (Guru, ApatarpanaAhara)**.¹⁹Intake of low caloric diet such as millets and highly fibrous vegetables such as cabbage may be said as ideal food for the obese; it takes longer time for its digestion.
- ❖ **Madhu (honey)**-Regular intake of natural honey is indicated in *Ayurveda* for the treatment of *Sthoulaya*. The action is due to *Lekhaniya* property of honey.
- ❖ **Luke warm water**- According to *Ayurveda*, warm water is a natural detoxifier. Warm water mops up impurities as it travels through over-taxed digestive system, sweeping away molecules left behind from partially digested food that could be slowing down what nature intended to be an enviably swift metabolic rate.
- ❖ **Cow urine**- Cow urine consists of urea, uric acid and minerals along with other waste that has not been digested by the cow. Researchers also claim that cow urine contains Vitamin A, B, C, D, E, Sodium, Potassium, Nitrogen and other minerals.

Enzymes which are very important for digestion are also found in cow urine.

- ❖ **Aushadh-** Use of single/ formulations of Ayurvedic drugs as *Guggulu, Guduchi, Ginger, Chitrak, Shilajita, Agnimantha, Devdaru, Musta, Kutaki, Trikatu,*

Triphala, NavakGuggulu, TriphalaGuggulu, Arogyavardhanivati etc. are responsible for the reduction of body weight and fat.

- ❖ **Anupan-** Luke warm water and honey (*Madhudaka*)²⁰.

Table 3: Pathya/ApathyaAhara/Vihar²¹

Aharavarga(food)	Pathya (Suitable)	Apathya (Unsuitable)
ShukaDhanya(Food grain)	Yava, Venuyava, Kodrava, Nivara	Godhuma, Navanna, Sali
ShamiDhanya(Pulses)	Mudga, Rajmasha, Kullatha, Masura, Adhaki	Masha, tila
ShakaVarga(Vegetables)	Vrintaka, Patrashaka, Patola	Madhuraphala
Drava(liquid stuff)	Takra, Madhu, Ushnodaka, Dugdha, tiltaila, Asava, Arishta	Ikshu, Navnita, Ghrita, Dadhi
Mamsa(meat)	RohitaMatsya	Anupa, Audaka

Table 4: Pathya / ApathyaVihara

Pathya	Apathya
Shrama(Hardwork)	SheetalaJala
Jagarana(Late nights)	Divaswapa (Day sleeping)
Vyavaya(Sexual activity)	Avyayama, Avyavaya (less exercise and less indulgence in sexual activity)
NityaLanghana(Regular use of Reducing therapy)	SwapnaPrasanga (Excessive sleeping)
Chintana (Thinking)	SukhaShaiyya (Comfortable bedding)
Shoka (Sorrow)	NityaHarsha (Happiness)
Krodha (Anger)	Achintana, ManasoNivritti (Idle mind)

CONCLUSION

Sthaulya is a disorder of *Santarpananidana* with the involvement of mainly *Medodhatu* and *Kaphapradhanatridosh*. Prevention is better than cure. The person suffering from obesity or prone to the obesity should be encouraged to develop a healthy eating habit and to avoid the foods with high calories; high sugar contents. An emphasis on long- term weight control and maintaining good health rather than on short- term weight loss is required. The main line of treatment in *Ayurveda* is *Nidanparivarjana* and *Guru, Apatarpana* con-

sisting of dietary regimens, treatment modalities which decrease the fat from the body.

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