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A Review on *Sthoulya* with special reference to Obesity

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ABSTRACT

Obesity is an abnormal accumulation of body fat, usually 20% or more over an individual ideal body weight. In Ayurveda, Obesity is described as *Medo Roga* or *Sthoulya*. Continuous indulgence in high-fat food, fried items, etc., along with a sedentary lifestyle leads to excess accumulation of body fat which gets deposited in the numerous body channels. Appropriate Ayurvedic internal medicines along with *Shodhan* procedures are used to achieve the best results, without any side effects. *Vamana*, *Virechan*, *Basti*, *Udvartan* according to vitiation of *Dosha*, these *Shodhana* procedures gives effective results. *Pathya Apathya* (Diet management) & Lifestyle modifications play an important role in the management of Obesity. *Sthoulya* (Obesity) is such a disease, which provides the platform for so many hazards like hypertension, diabetes mellitus etc. as well as psychological disorders like stress. The mortality and morbidity rates are more in obese person. It is one of the most common, yet among the most neglected public health problems in the present world. In rich countries, obesity is more common among the less educated, but in poor countries, obesity is more common among the highly educated. In classics *Sthoulya* (Obesity) has been described under the *Santarpanajanya Vikara* and in *Bahudoshavastha* condition. Ayurvedic treatment aims not only at the radical removal of the causative factors of the disease, but also at the restoration of *Doshika* equilibrium.

Key words: Obesity, *Sthoulya*, Lifestyle disorder.

INTRODUCTION

It is a universally accepted fact that good health plays an important role in human development. According to the concepts of Ayurveda, good health is based on the equilibrium state of *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*. Furthermore, in Ayurveda there is clear-cut emphasis on maintaining physical, mental and

spiritual well-being. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines good health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity, which is in close proximity to the definition of good health mentioned in Ayurvedic classics. With the evolution of civilization man has become more and more physically inactive. Now a day the codes and conducts narrated in the ancient texts of Ayurveda are ignored. Modernization, affluence, science and technological development lead to still more sedentary life styles. By exposing oneself to all these factors human beings unknowingly invited a number of diseases, out of which *Sthoulya* is one which disturbs physical, mental as well as social health of an individual. *Sthoulya* is the abnormal & excess accumulation of *Medo Dhatu*. Frequent and/or excess intake of *Kapha* increasing foods, sedentary lifestyle, lack of mental & physical exercise are the most common etiological factors. *Sthoulya* can also occur due to *Beeja Dosha* i.e., hereditary causes. In

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modern medical science *Sthoulya* is compared with Obesity^[1] and it is defined as excess of body fat that poses a health risk. It is caused by excess calorie intake, but endocrine disorders like hypothalamic disorders, Hypothyroidism, Cushing's syndrome etc. can also be the cause of Obesity. Obesity can also be drug induced or due to genetic inheritance.

Etymological derivation of *Sthoulya*

In Sanskrit grammar each and every word is derived from a particular root word called as *Moola Dhatu*. Similarly the word *Sthoulya* is derived from *Moola Dhatu* "Sthu" with "Ach" Pratyaya, which stands probably for bulky or big or thick.

Definition of *Sthoulya*

A person in whom excessive and abnormal increase of *Medo Dhatu* along with *Mamsa Dhatu* is found, which result into pendulous appearance of buttocks, belly and breasts is called as *Sthoola*. The increased bulk is not matched by corresponding increase in energy.

Obesity Definition

Obesity can be defined as an excess of body fat that poses a health risk. The term is normally reserved to describe people who are grossly overweight, while the term overweight is more frequently used to designate mild degree of adiposity. Approximately 20% of excess over desirable weight imparts a health risk.

Meda

Sthoulya being a *Dushya* dominant disorder, *Meda* plays a major role in its pathogenesis. *Meda* is an important *Dhatu* among *Sapta Dhatu* and its main functions is to smoothen the body by its *Sneha* Property.

"Medhyati Snihayati Anen Iti Medah"

Synonyms of *Meda*

1. **Mamsaja and Mamsatej** : *Medodhatu* is formed from *Mamsa Dhatu* by *Mamsa Agnipaka*. So, it is known as *Mamsaja* or *Mamsatej*.
2. **Astrikrita** : *Meda* is responsible for formation of *Asthi Dhatu* so it is known as *Astrikrita*.

3. **Vasa and Vapa** : The fatty substance which locates in *Mamsa* is called as *Vasa* and when it is deposited in abdomen, it is termed as *Vapa*.

4. **Majja** : *Asthi Madhya Gata Sneha* is known as *Majja*.

5. **Goda** : "*Mastishka Gata Sneha*" is known as *Goda* or *Mastulunga*.

The total quantity of *Meda* is 2 *Anjali* and the *Vasa* is 3 *Anjali*. Thus, total *Meda* content of body is enumerated as 5 *Anjali*. In *Sthoulya*, this proportion is found to be raised.

Karma of *Meda Dhatu*

The main functions of *Meda Dhatu* are *Snehana*, *Sweda*, *Drudhatva*, *Asthipusti* and *Netra*, *Gatra*, *Snigdhatva*

- **Snehana**: *Sneha* property maintains the luster of skin, hairs and eyes etc.
- **Sweda**: The function of *Meda* is to produce *Sweda*. *Sweda* is mentioned as *Mala* of *Meda*.
- **Asthi Pusti**: Another function of *Meda* is nourishment of further *Dhatu* i.e., *Asthi*.
- **Drudhatva**: It is possible with the help of *Snayu*, the *Upadhatu* of *Meda*. Both *Snayu* and *Sandhi* are directly related to the *Asthi Dhatu*. *Snayu* provides supports to *Asthi* and *Sandhi* helps in joint formation.
- **Netra and Gatrassnigdhatva**: These are the symptoms of *Sthoulya* which may arise through increased *Snehana* function of *Meda*.

Medovaha Srotas

The channels, which give nutrition to the *Medodhatu* or the vessels carrying the nutritive material up to the site of *Medodhatu* can be considered as *Medovahasrotas*. As an opinion of various authors, it can be correlated with capillaries-of perinephric tissue or omentum etc.

Utpatti according to Mahabhuta theory

According to *Charaka* (Ch.Chi.15/29-30), the *Rakta Dhatu* is combined with *Vayu*, *Tej*, *Apa* and is

solidified by the *Ushma* so that it gets converted into *Mamsa*. This *Mamsa* is again digested by *Mamsagni*, *Medodhatvagni* and gets combined with the quality of *Apa* and *Snigdha Dravya*. Like this it finally gets converted into the *Medodhatu*.

Nidana Panchaka

The need for proper diagnosis of a disease before planning its management needs no special emphasis as it has been rightly described by Charaka. He says;

Rogamadau Parikshet Tato Anantaram Aushadham |

It means that the *Rogapareeksha* should be done properly before prescribing the medicines.

Nidana means to arrive at the conclusive diagnosis of the disease after due consideration of the *Nidana Pancaka* viz., *Hetu* (Etiology), *Purvarupa* (Prodromal symptoms), *Rupa* (Symptomatology), *Upashaya* (Relieving and Aggravating factors) and *Samprapti* i.e., Pathogenesis.

Nidana

The knowledge of *Nidana* not only aids the physician towards therapeutics but also in advising about *Pathyaapathya*.

The vitiation of *Meda* and *Sleshma* are said to be responsible for *Sthoulya*. *Charaka* has stressed more on the exogenous causes while *Sushruta* and *Vagbhatta* mentioned the endogenous causes of *Sthoulya*. Exogenous causes pertains to the diets that has the potential of increasing the *Meda* or body fat where as *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Srotas* etc. comes under endogenous causes.

In short, *Nidana* of *Sthoulya* can be categorized under four categories;

- *Aharaja Nidana*
- *Viharaja Nidana*
- *Manasika Nidana*
- *Anyana Nidana*

Samprapti

Series of pathological events taking place during the journey of a healthy human body towards any disease

is known as *Samprapti*. Involvement of *Dosha*, *Dushya*, *Srotas*, *Agni*, *Ama* etc. is mandatory for disease manifestation. They are known as *Samprapti Ghataka*.

On the other hand, *Acharya Sushruta's* concept of *Kriyakala* describes the mode and stages of the development of disease. A good knowledge and understanding of *Samprapti* is very essential for early diagnosis and prognosis. It is also required for adapting preventive and curative measures. To study and understand the *Samprapti* of *Sthoulya* it is dealt under the four headings:

1. *Samanya Samprapti*
2. *Samprapti Ghataka*
3. *Naidanika Samprapti*
4. *Samprapti* based on *Kriyakala*.

Purvarupa

Purvarupa are the symptoms that appear prior to the complete manifestation of the disease. None of the Ayurvedic texts has described the *Purvarupa* of *Sthoulya*. *Acharya Charaka*, in *Nidana Sthana*, has mentioned similar pathogenesis of *Prameha* and *Sthoulya* the reason being that in both there is vitiation of *Kapha* and *Meda*. Therefore, *Purvarupa* of *Prameha* and *Medovaha Strotodushti Lakshana* can be considered as *Purvarupa* of *Sthoulya*.

These are as follows:

- *Atinidra*
- *Tandra*
- *Alasya*
- *Visra Sharira Gandha*
- *Anga Gaurava*
- *Anga Shaithilyata* etc.

According to *Charaka*, wherever *Purvarupa* of disease are not mentioned, the weak manifestation of *Rupa* should be considered as *Purvarupa* of the concerned diseases. Keeping the views of *Acharya Charaka* in mind, *Lakshana* of *Kapha Vriddhi* like *Alasya*,

Angashaithilya, Madhurasyata, Atinidra, Atipipasa etc. may also be considered as *Purvarupa*.

Roopa

Roopa or *Lakshana* is the most important diagnostic parameter of a disease. At this stage, *Dosha Dooshya Samurchana* is completed & the onset of the diseases takes place, which gives rise to the symptomology of the disease. These sign & symptoms may change from time to time according to the progress of the diseases. Certain symptoms may newly appear while some may disappear as the disease progresses. We may not find all the symptoms in every patient at a time.

The symptomatology of *Sthoulya* is asserted by *Acharya* in broad manner. To understand them, it is elaborated as follow.

According to *Charaka, Cala Sphika, Cala Udara, Cala Stana, Ayathopchayotsaha, and Ati Meda-Mamsa Vrddhi* are very obvious in all the patients of *Sthoulya*, hence these may be considered as cardinal symptoms or *Pratyatma Lakshana*.

Besides these cardinal symptoms, *Ashta Dosha* of *Sthoulya* viz. *Ayusyahrassa, Javoprodha, Kricha Vyavayata, Daurbalya, Daurgandhya, Svedabadha, Ksudha Atimatrata, Pipasa Atiyoga* are the most prominent clinical features of *Sthoulya* as narrated by *Charaka, Susruta* and *Ashtanga Samgraha*.

Chikitsa

Chikitsa in general is defined as the actions, which bring the equilibrium of *Dhatu*.

Acharya Charaka has further amplified the scope of the term *Chikitsa*. According to him, "*Chikitsa* aims not only at the radical removal of the causative factors of the disease, but also at the restoration of the *Doshika* equilibrium".

While describing the *Chikitsa* of *Sthoulya*, *Charaka* has said that it is very difficult to treat *Atisthoola* people because, if *Karshana* therapy is applied then it leads to further aggravation of already aggravated *Jathragni* and *Vayu* and if *Brimhana* therapy is applied it further increase the *Meda*. General principles of management of any disorder is;

Samshodhanam Samshamanam Nidanasya Cha Varjanam |

Thus, in any disorder management is divided into 3 parts.

1. *Samshodhana*
2. *Samshamana*
3. *Nidana Parivarjana*

The management of *Sthoulya* is also explained in detail as follows;

Bahya Chikitsa

Ruksha Udvartana is the *Bahi Parimarjana Chikitsa* indicated for the management of *Sthoulya*. *Acharya Charaka* has also mentioned *Rooksha Udvartana* for *Sthoulya*. *Vagbhata* has mentioned the benefits of *Rooksha Udvartana* in general as *Kaphahara, Medasa Parivilayana, Sthirikarnam Angam* etc.

Samshodhana Therapy

The therapies in which the vitiated *Dosha* are eliminated after mobilizing them from their respective sites by *Urdhva* or *Adha Marga* from the body is known as *Shodhana* therapy.

Being a syndromic entity (*Bahudosha Lakshana*), *Samshodhana* therapy is highly recommended for *Sthoulya* management by *Charaka*. According to *Vagbhata, Atisthoulya* patients with *Adhika Dosha* and *Adhika Bala* should be treated by *Samshodhana* therapy.

Description of various *Poorvakarma* and *Pradhanakarma* of *Shodhana* for *Sthoola* given by various *Acharya* is as follows:

Snehana

Snehana Karma is always restricted for the patients of *Sthoulya*. However, *Lekhaniya, Medohara* properties and *Sthulatvahara Karma* of *Taila* are described in *Ayurveda*. So, on exigency usage of *Taila* is recommended.

Swedana

Swedana for obese patient is contraindicated but if essential *Mrudu Sweda* is advised. *Anagneya Sweda*

mentioned in *Sutrasthana* of *Charaka* can also be adopted.

Vamana

Most of the texts have prohibited the use of *Vamana Karma* due to inability to bear the potency of medicine and therapy causing *Pranaparodha* (life threatening condition).

Virechana

Though *Virechana* has not been recommended for patients of *Sthoulya* but *Virechaka Dravya* mentioned in Ayurvedic texts like *Haritaki*, *Katuki*, *Aragvadha*, *Trivruta*, *Danti Dravanti* etc., which have *Medonashaka* property could be applied to the patients of *Sthoulya*. Practically also *Virechana Karma* seems to be fruitful for the management of *Sthoulya*.

Basti

Ruksha, *Ushna* & *Tikshna Basti* are suggested by *Acharya Charaka* for *Sthoulya Chikitsa*. A number of *Basti Kalpa* are also mentioned in Ayurvedic texts but *Lekhana Basti* is considered as the best therapy for *Sthoulya/Medovridhi*. *Sharangdhara* has given a clear description regarding the properties of *Lekhana Dravya* and characteristics of *Lekhana Basti*.

Raktamokshna

Maharshi Kashyapa and *Bhavamishra* have recommended *Raktamokshana* for the treatment of *Sthoulya* in *Chikitsasthana*, *Medasvi Dhatri Chikitsa*. *Charaka* has also mentioned *Raktamokshana* for treatment of *Santarpana Janya Vyadhi* including *Atisthoulya*.

Nasya

Sushruta has recommended the use of *Triphaladi Taila Nasya* in the patients of *Medovridhi*

Samshamana Therapy

Shamana is defined as the therapy, which does not do *Shodhana* of the *Dosha*, not disturb the equation of balanced *Dosha* and simultaneously bring equilibrium of imbalance of *Dosha*.

Langhana is advisable in *Santarpana Janya Vyadhi*, *Amashyotha Vikara*, *Shleshmika Vikara*, *Rasaja Vikara*

and it is the best remedy for the *Sama* condition of disease. So, all ten types of *Langhana* can be applied for the patients of *Sthoulya* according to *Rogi-Roga Bala*. *Charaka Samhita* has given treatment of *Sthoulya* in following words.

Guru Cha Apatarpanam Chestam Sthoolanam Karshanam Prati | Vataghnanyanaapanani Sleshma Medo Harani Cha || i.e., Administration of *Guru* and *Apatarpana* articles which possess additional *Vata*, *Shleshma* and *Medonashaka* properties are considered as ideal for *Shamana* therapy. *Chakrapani* has explained that *Guru* property is required to alleviate vitiated *Agni* thereby suppressing the *Atikshudha*. Along with *Guru Dravya*, *Apatarpana Dravya* provides non-nourishment and thus leads to depletion of *Meda*. For example, *Madhu* possess *Guru* and *Ruksha* properties, hence it is ideal for management of *Sthoulya*.

Gangadhara has interpreted that *Guru* property is suitable to alleviate *Tikshnagni* and vitiated *Vata* especially *Kosthagata Vata* and thereby *Atikshudha*, and *Apatarpana* property is that which does not provide *Tarpana* (nourishment) and cause reduction of *Meda*.

The drugs planned for *Sthoulya* should have *Deepana* & *Pachana* property to enhance *Agni*. They should also be *Amapachaka* as obstruction of *Medovaha Srotas* by *Ama* is main factor for *Medoroga*.

The drugs must have *Rookshna* & *Chedana* property to produce *Srotovishodhana*. Along with these *Teekshna*, *Ushna*, *Rooksha*, *Guna Dravya* are advised as they are opposite to *Manda*, *Snigdha* & *Sheeta Guna* of *Kapha* & *Meda*.

Again, it is told that the causative factors of *Karshya* i.e., *Ruksha Annapana Prayoga*, *Langhana*, *Pramitashana*, *Shoka*, *Nidra Vega Vinigraha*, *Ruksha Udavartana*, *Krodha* etc. can be practiced as line of treatment for *Sthoulya*.

Some important references about *Shamana Chikitsa* of *Sthoulya* are mentioned as follows;

- Some *Samshamana Yoga* like *Guduchi*, *Bhadramusta*, *Triphala*, *Takrarishta*, *Mukshika*,

Vidangadi Lauha, Bilvadipanchmula and Shilajatu with *Agnimantha Svarasa* are advised for prolonged period.

- In *Charaka Samhita*, drugs and preparations like *Karshana Yavagu* of *Gavedhuka*, *Lekhaniya Mahakashaya*, *Bibhitaka*, *Venuyava* and *Madhudaka* are advocated as *Medonashaka* and *Lekhana*.
- *Akasha* and *Vayu Mahabhuta* dominant *Dravya* are attributed to have *Laghavakara* action, so these can be used for management of *Sthoulya*.
- *Katu* and *Kashaya Rasa* are having *Karshana*, *Upchayahara* properties, while *Tikta Rasa* is having *Lekhana* and *Medo Upshoshana Karma*.

DISCUSSION

According to *Charaka Acharya*, the principle of treatment for obese is "Heavy and non-nourishing diet" (*Guru Apatarpana*). Because by virtue of their heaviness such diets would minimize the force of the aggravated power of digestion and due to their non-nourishing nature, they would help to reduce fat. Ayurveda emphasizes the holistic care and treatment in any disease. Spiritual, psychological and physical, these all 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 obesity. Now a day Ayurvedic management is recognized as the better option for those whom are suffering from the remedy of obesity (*Sthoulya*). Diets and drinks that alleviate *Vata* and *Kapha* and which can reduce fat. Enema with drugs that are sharp (*Tikshna*), ununctous (*Ruksha*) and hot. Uction with ununctous (*Ruksha*) drugs. Intake of *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia* Miers), *Musta* (*Cyperus rotundus* Linn), *Haritaki* (*Terminalia chebula* Linn), *Bibhitaka* (*Terminalia belerica* Roxb) and *Amalaka* (*Embllica officinalis* Gaertn). Administration of *Takrarishtha*. Administration of honey. Intake of *Vidanga* (*Embellica ribes* Burm F.), *Nagara* (*Zingiber officinale* Rose.), *Yavaksara* (a preparation of barley containing among others sodium and potassium bicarbonate), powder of black iron along with honey

and powder of *Yava* (*Hordium vulgare* Linn.) and *Amalaki* (*Embllica officinalis* Gaertn).

CONCLUSION

Prevention is better than cure, you must take precautions rather following treatment after increase in weight. Once you are obese it is very difficult to treat yourself. The person suffering from obesity or prone to the obesity should be encouraged to avoid the foods with high calories, high sugar contents. Follow up of proper *Dinacharya*, proper *Vyayama*. *Asana* and *Pranayama* such as *Paschimottanasana* (the back stretching pose) *Bhujangasana* (the cobra pose), *Pawanmuktasana* (the wind releasing pose) are helpful in the reduction of body fat. Regular exercises like brisk walking, running and swimming in morning hours for the duration of 30-45 minutes and this duration should be extended day by day as possible.

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