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Conceptual Understanding of *Ahar* and *Yoga* in the Management of Obesity

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has recognized the importance of *Ahar-Vihar* and *Yoga* to maintain and promote health, balance & happiness in *Swasthavritta*. Wellness is one of the most important issues of life, wellness means a state of being and feeling healthy & well. In the current scenario, most of the Indian population is consuming processed food which is having a tremendous amount of Trans fat sugars & other unhealthy and artificial ingredients. Junk food, alcohol & sedentary lifestyle are leading us to silent self-destruction, making one in every five Indian men & women either obese or overweight. The concept of *Ahar-Vihar* & *Yoga* is one of the significant contribution of *Swasthavritta* in *Ayurveda* to maintain and promote health. In this article attempt has been made to reveal the exact role and action of *Ahar* and *Yoga* on *Sthoulya*.

Key Words: Sthoulya, Ahar, Yoga, Obesity

INTRODUCTION

According to *Ayurveda*, *Sthoulya* is a state of increased *medadhātu* (fat).¹ It is one of the *Santarpanotha Vikar*² where a physician needs to apply *Vishesh Siddhant* which can restore the unhealthy increase of components to the healthy form. Prevalence of *Sthoulya* in society is increasing day by day due to decreased awareness regarding exercise & faulty dietary habits. It has reached upto epidemic level. *Sthoulya* is a disease in which there is an abundant growth of *Medodhātu* in the body beyond normal limits. Obesity means having too much body fat, it is different from being overweight. The weight may come from muscles, bone, fat and/or body water. Both terms mean that a person's weight is greater than what's considered healthy for his or her height. Obesity occurs over time when you eat more calories than you use. The balance between calories-in & calories-out differs for each person. Factors that might affect your weight include your genetic make-up, overeating, eating high-fat foods & not being physically active. Being obese increases your risk of Diabetes, Heart disease, Stroke, Arthritis and some Cancers.² The present study is aimed to determine the effect of *Ahar* & *Yoga* on *Sthoulya*.

Worldwide obesity has more than doubled since 1980. In 2014 more than 1.9 billion adults, 18 years and older were overweight, of these over 600 million were obese. Most of the world's population lives in countries where overweight & obesity kills more people than underweight.

BEFORE KNOWING THE AHAR & YOGA LET US FIRST UNDERSTAND REGULATION OF BODY WEIGHT³

A part of the brain known as the hypothalamus is involved in the regulation of body weight. A certain area of the brain called the hypothalamic ventromedial, dorsomedial, paraventricular & arcuate nuclei are involved in appetite regulation & have receptors for leptin. The hypothalamic & other brain areas receive signals from the olfactory and taste receptors as well as from the oral mucous membrane, the jaw & muscles of mastication. These impulses reach the brain through different cranial nerves olfactory, lingual, trigeminal, glossopharyngeal & vagus.

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CAUSES OF OBESITY⁴

- Genetic factors
- Environmental factors like lifestyle behaviour, diet, physical activity
- Social factors like poverty & lower level of education
- Cultural factors like the type of food, way of cooking are different
- Diseases like hypothyroidism, Cushing syndrome, Polycystic ovarian syndrome
- Drugs like steroids, antidepressant

Body Mass Index⁵

The formula is $BMI = \frac{kg}{m^2}$ where kg is a person's weight in kilograms and m² is their height in metres squared.

- 19-15: Normal
- 26-30: Overweight
- 30 & higher : Obese
- 40 & higher: Extremely obese

AYURVED VIEW

In Ayurveda Obesity is regarded as *Medoroga* (a disorder of *medadhatu* /adipose tissue & fat metabolism) and *Santarpanjanyavikar* (an over nutritional disorder). According to *Acharya Charak*, "The person is called as obese who due to excessive increase of fat & muscles, has pendulous buttocks, abdomen & breast and suffers from deficient metabolism & energy"¹ (Figure 1).

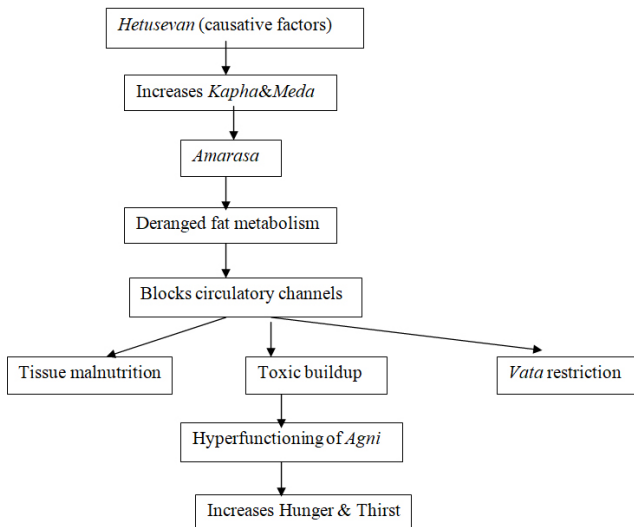


Figure 1: *Medorogsamprapti*:

According to *Acharya Charak*, *Vata* due to passage having been obstructed with fat, moves about abundantly in belly & thus stimulates digestion & absorbs food, hence the person digests food quickly & desires excessively the intake of food. In case of delay in taking food, he is afflicted with some severe disorders. These two *Agni* & *Vayu* are particu-

larly complicating & as such burn the obese like the forest fire burning the forest (Figure 1). In the event of excessive increase in fat, *Vayu* etc suddenly give rise to severe disorders & thus destroy life shortly.⁶

MANAGEMENT OF OBESITY

DIETARY CONTROL⁷

This is probably the only way available to reduce body weight in obese persons. If we take into account the daily calorie consumption as around 2200-2400 calories & the fact that 1 gm of fat produces 9 calories then it can be calculated that a fasting individual will lose is much more than this. It is due to the loss of water & electrolytes and this is soon regained once a normal diet is resumed

AHAR (DIETARY TREATMENT)⁷

- Favourable *rasa* – *Katu, Tikta, Kashaya*, Avoid – *Amla*
- Drink 1 glass *koshnajala + madhu + saindhav* at morning (use honey 1 year old)
- Eat 1 teaspoon Fenugreek seeds (*Methika*) before meal daily as it lowers the sugar & cholesterol
- For breakfast, take cholesterol-lowering Oatmeal
- Start the meal with Salads – cucumber, carrot, beet, cabbage
- Consume less oil & less ghee in food
- Don't eat anything between the meals
- Don't drink water immediately after the meal, drink between the meals
- Fat-free milk, yoghurt & cheese to be taken
- Use plenty of vegetables in the diet, there is no feeling of weakness, the sensation of fullness of the stomach but there will not be more calories
- Before sleeping at night, take ¼ spoon fenugreek (*Methika*) powder + ¼ spoon black cumin powder with lukewarm water
- Increase fibre intake in the form of raw fruits, vegetables, whole cereals etc
- No longer gap between the foods can eat frequently but food should be less in quantity & less in fat
- Avoid fruits like Mango, Grapes, Guava, Custard apple, Banana, Chikku
- Consume sprouts like Green gram (*Mudga*), Lentil, & Beans in the daily diet
- Don't sleep immediately after the meal, avoid sleep at noon
- Can use spices like Coriander, Clove (*Lavang*), Asfatida (*Hindu*), Cardamom (*Velchi*), Garlic, Ginger in more quantity in food.
- Cook with oils which are low in fat & saturated fat like corn, sunflower, soybean, cottonseed, olive, peanut & sesam oils.
- Eat less fat, less sodium, fewer calories & more fibre

DIET PLAN⁷

After getting up: 1 glass lukewarm water + black salt + honey, 1 cup tea with less sugar & less milk

Breakfast: 1 cup milk without sugar, Salads like cucumber carrot tomato, 1 Orange

Lunch: mixed veg soup/corn soup, cooked Pumpkin, 1 cup Dal, 2 *Chapattis*, Salad –Onion/ radish

4:00 P.M.: 1 glass Buttermilk, Fruits like Lemon/ Pomegranate

Dinner: ½ *Bajara roti/ jawar roti*, ½ bowl Dal, Salad, Garlic

IMPACT OF YOGA IN *STHOULYA*:

Paschimottanasana (Forward bend pose): It reduces fatty deposits in the abdomen, Tones the abdominal pelvic organs

Sarvangasana (Shoulder stand pose): It stimulates the thyroid & parathyroid glands & normalizes their functions. Stretches the heart muscles by returning more venous blood to the heart

Halasan (Plough posture): It reduces excess weight without weakening the body. Improves the blood circulation & nourishes many of the essential internal organs

Dhanurasana (Bow pose): It strengthens the back & abdominal muscles. Good stress & fatigue buster. Tones the leg & arm muscles

Virasan (Hero pose): It stretches the thigh, knees & ankles. Therapeutic for high blood pressure & Asthma

Trikonasan (Triangle pose): It strengthens the legs, knees, ankles, arms & chest. Increase mental & physical equilibrium. Reduce anxiety, stress & backache

Chakrasana (Wheel pose): It strengthens Liver, Pancreas, Kidneys & Heart. Stimulates thyroid & pituitary gland. Increases energy & counteracts depression

Matsyasan (Fish pose): It helps to reduce thigh & belly fat. It helps to cure respiratory disorders

Ardhamatsyendrasana (Half spinal twist pose): It increases hips & spine flexibility. Releases excess toxins & heat from tissue & organs

Ushtrasana (Camel pose): It stretches the entire front of the body, ankles, thighs & groins. Stimulates the organs of the abdomen & neck

DISCUSSION

The term “*Sthoulya*” itself indicates the deposition of *Prithvi* & *Apa Mahabhuta* dominant factors in the body. *Nidan* (causative factors) of *Sthoulya* is divided into four categories i.e. *Aharatmak* (food), *Viharatmak* (behavioural), *Ma-*

nas (psychological) & *Anya* (others). Intake of highly refined food with the maximum percentage of carbohydrates & working with high-tech machinery, which makes a person less active & prone to *Sthoulya*. *Samprapti* of *Sthoulya* can be interpreted in two ways: According to *Acharya Charak*, increased *Jatharagni* causes maximum ingestion & leads to maximum absorption of *Prithvi* & *Apamahabhut* dominant factors in the body leading to increased *Medodhatu* in the body. According to *Dalhan*, there is a state of *Medo-dhatvagnimandya* (reduced status of a type of metabolic component situated at the level of *Medodhatu*), which leads to excessive formation of improper *Medodhatu* leading to *Sthoulya*. Here, *Sthoulya* is taken for study because there is an abundant growth of *Medodhatu* in the body which is having *Prithvi* & *Apa Mahabhut* dominance. It is a condition of *Vridhhi* of *Medodhatu*, it requires proper *Ahar & Yoga* which can cause a diminution of *Medodhatu*.

CONCLUSION

Causative factors of *Sthoulya* mentioned in classics are now changing. Increasing stress, faulty dietary habits & decreased awareness regarding *Ahar & Yoga* are becoming the prominent causative factors for *Sthoulya*. *Kapha Prakruti* persons were found more prone to *Sthoulya*, so they should be advised proper diet regimens & *Yoga*. In society, the percentage of the population suffering from *Sthoulya* is increasing day by day so they should be made aware regarding the disease & its severe complications before it reaches to an epidemic level. This study shows the impact of *Ahar & Yoga* in the management of *Sthoulya*.

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