

Sthaulya (Obesity): An Ayurvedic Perspective

Dr. Dhanashree Ashok Mahajan^{*1} & Dr. Sharayu A. Kore²

^{*1}M.D. Scholar (Dravyagunavigyana),

²M.D. (Dravyagunavigyana), H.O.D department of DravyagunaVigyana

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Abstract

Overtime the ancient times, *Ayurveda* has proved to be the best choice for *Sthaulya Vyadhi*. Overweight and obesity contribute to many diseases; the health implications of obesity are grave often fatal. A definition of *Swastha Purusha* according to *Ayurvedais*, 'A healthy body is the only one media to achieve the ultimate goal among the *Chaturvidha Purushartha*'. *Atisthula* comprise sin *Nindit Purusha*. Therefore it is important for everyone to maintain a healthy weight, healthy mind in the right manner.

Introduction

Obesity by definition is the state of being grossly fat or overweight. Obesity is when person is carrying too much body fat for their height and gender. According to the WHO, a person is considered to be obese if they have a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or greater. Obesity is defined as a condition where one is at least 20% more than the ideal body weight. Obesity is normally caused by a sedentary lifestyle, lack of physical activity and irregular diet and sleep pattern and stress. Over the time, overweight and obesity contribute to the diseases like heart attacks, stroke, arteriosclerosis, hypertension and diabetes. Mental afflictions like mood swings and even depression – the health implications of obesity are grave and often fatal. Therefore, it is important for everyone to maintain a healthy weight but in the right manner.

In the *Ayurveda Charakachary* ahas explained- A person having pendulous appearance of *Sphik* (Hip), *Udara* (Abdomen) and *Stana*(Chest) due to excess deposition of *Meda* (fats) along with reduced zeal towards life called "*Atisthula*". Many theories have been put forward with many new hypotheses, describing the exact pathogenesis of *Sthaulya*. One becomes corpulent like a boar by not minding about business, saturating diet and indulgence in sleep.

Literary Review

In *Ayurveda*, *Sthaulya* has been described since very early days in various *Samhitas*, *Sangraha Grant has*, *Nighantu* etc. Charaka has described *Sthaulya* amongst the eight most unwanted diseases in *Sutrasthana* 21 i.e. '*Ashtaunndit Purusha*'.

Vedic Period: References like *Medas*, *Medini* and *Pivasi* are available in *Atharva-Veda* with detailed description of anthropology and anthropometry. *Meda* and *Vapa* are mentioned in *Rig-Veda* and *Yajur-Veda*; '*Upachita*' disease has also been described in this reference of *Yajurveda*. In context of health *Veda* appreciates exercise and hard work and has advised to strengthen and harden body like a stone, so that it becomes free from hazards of flabbiness of the body and obesity.

Samhita Period: *Charaka* has described *Sthaulya*. *Sushruta* has narrated the etiopathogenesis is of *Sthaulya Roga* on the basis of an endogenous entity being caused due to "*Dhatvagni Mandya*". *Sthula* and *Atisthula* words are used in *Kashyapa Samhita*.

Kashyapa has given some new aspects of management while narrating *Medasvi Dhatri Chikitsai*. i.e. treatment of obese frostier mother.

Bhelahas described *Sthaulyaas* a disorder of vitiated *Meda*. *Madhava Nidanahas* elaborated the symptomatology of *Sthaulya* and new symptoms of it like *Moha*.

Vagbhatta has explained *Sthaulya* on the basis of formation of *Aamand* disturbance of the process of *Dhatu Parinama* i.e. inter cellular metabolism and mechanism.

Ashtanga Hridaya and *Ashtanga Sangraha* have mentioned *Sthaulya*. But after observing challenging nature of the disease they concluded in the *Sutrasthana* that there is no treatment of excessive obesity.

In *Sharangdhara Samhita*, *Sthaulya* is described by the name *Medo-Dosha*.

Period of modernization: *Hemadri* has advised to take *Yavanal Churna*, *Madhukjalam*, *Dandahataas Takra*, *Agnimanthas Tarkari* and *Yavaksharin* the management of *Sthaulya*.

Bhavamishra has given more emphasis on risk factors, morbidity and other additional regional and behavioral therapies.

Yogaraj has mentioned *rasa* preparation in *Medorogadhikara*.

Etymological Derivation of *Sthaulya* (Obesity):

The word "*Sthaulya*" is derived from *Moola Dhatu* "*Sthu-Sthoola Brihani*" with the addition of "*Ach*" *Pratyaya* respectively which means thick or solid or strong.

'Obesity' word is derived from Latin term 'obesus'.

Ob-by reason of; Obesusu- having eaten; Obesity- grossly fat.

Synonyms of *Sthaulya* (Obesity):

Medasvita, *Medovridhi*, *Medurata*, *Medapushietc* terms used for extensive growth of *Medo-Dhatu* without risk factor; *Sthaulya*, *Sthulata*, *Medorogaetc* for extensive growth of *Medodhatu* with minimum risk factors; *Ati-Sthaulya*, *Medodosha*, *Medodushti*, *Medovikar*, *Jatharya* for morbid obesity; *Tundika*, *Mahodara*, *Sthulodara*, *Jathara Unnatietc* for android obesity.

Adiposity, Overweight, Fatness, Turgidity, Hypertrophy, Stoutness, Plumpness etc are the synonym of the word 'Obesity'.

Definition

According to *Ayurveda*: A person having pendulous appearance of *Sphika* (Hip), *Udara* (abdomen) and *Stana* (Chest) due to excess deposition of *Meda* along with *Mansa Dhatu* and having unequal or abnormal distribution of *Meda* with reduced zeal towards life is called "*Atisthula*".

According to Modern view: Obesity is the an abnormal growth of adipose tissue due to an enlargement of fat cell size or an increase in fat cell number or a combination of both; it also defined as an increased in body weight, beyond the limitation of skeletal and physical requirement as a result of excessive accumulation of fat.

Classification of *Sthaulya*

There is no such clear classification of *Sthaulya* found in our classics. From the references, *Sthaulya* may be classified as-

Charak-

1. *Sthula*
2. *Atisthula*

Sushrut-

1. *Sthaulya*
2. *Medoroga*

Vagbhata-

1. *Adhika*
2. *Madhya*
3. *Hina*

Sharangdhara-

1. *MedoDosha*

Diagnosis

According to *Ayurveda* diagnostic methods described are subjective as well as objective type. *Sushruta* has mentioned it as “*ChakshuIndriyaVigneya Bhava*”. According to this over nutrition condition (*Sthaulya*) and under nutrition condition (*Karshya*) both can be diagnosed by inspection only. *AyurvedicPramanaPariksha* and *SamhananPariksha* can be correlated with objective criteria of diagnosis like measurement of height, weight, various girth measurements and skin-fold-thickness. *Charakacharya* has been mentioned anthropometry of body, under the caption of *DashavidhaPariksha*.

Etiological Factors-

Hereditary component (*Beejadosha*) besides dietetic; regimomial and psychological factors; components which may vitiate *Meda* and *Shleshma*; *Dhatwagnimandya*; substance which increase those *Bhavas* (qualities) which it inherits are- *Dravyais* fatty material like *Mamsa*, *GunaareSheeta*, *Snigdha*, *Guru* and *Karmais Diwaswapna*, *Avyayama*, Over eating (*Atibhojan*), excessive consumption of heavy food (*Guru aharsevan*), Excessive Sweet food intake (*Madhura Ahar Sevan*), Excessive consumption of cold diet (*Sheetaharsevan*), Excessive consumption of unctuous food (*Snigdhaaharsevan*), Usage of fresh grains (*Navannasevan*), Usage of fresh alcoholic preparation, Usage of domestic animal's meat, Excessive use of curd, Usage of sugarcane (*Ikshu*), excessive use of rice (*Shali*), Excessive use of *Pahasioulusmunga* (*Masha Sevan*), Excessive wheat (*Godhuma*), Usage of aquatic animal's meat (*Audaka rasa sevan*).

Purvarupa

Purvarupa of *Sthaulya* is not described, so according to *Charaka* the weak manifestation of *Rupa* (Symptoms) may be considered as *Purvarupa* of concerned disease like *Alasya*, *Angashaitilya*, *Madhurasyata*, *Atinidra*, *Atipipasa* etc.

Rupa (Symptoms)

Aayushoharso, *Javoprodha*, *Kricchavyavayata*, *Daurbalya*, *Daurgandhya*, *Swedbadha*, *Kshudhitmatram*, *Atipipasa*, *chalasphika*, *chalaudara*, *chalastana*, *kshudra shwas*, *nidraadhikya*, *gatra sada*, *Alpavyavaya*, *UdarparshavVridhi*, *Alasya*, *Moha*.

Samprapti (Etiopathogenesis):

In pathogenesis of *Sthaulya*, all the three Doshas are vitiated, especially *KledakKapha*, *Pachak Pitta*, *SamanandVyaan Vayu* are the responsible factors for proper digestion and metabolism of food at the level of alimentary tract and body tissue. *Dushti* of these *Tri-Dosh* components results in indigestion metabolic deformity and formation of *Amaat* tissue level as well as alimentary tract. Due to excess hunger and thirst, *Annarasais* formed and specificity of diet dominance *dhatu poshakansha* is formed in more quantity. Initially the *rasagata*, *raktagata* and *mansagata Sneha* starts increasing and also increases the production of *Medadhātu*. Due to *Medodhatwagnimandyat* his condition worsens and nourishment of further *dhatu* doesn't happen properly. Patient shows the symptoms of *Rasavridhi*, *kaphavridhi*. *Medadhātu* increases with physical signs and finally lands into *Sthaulya*.

Upadrava-

If *Sthaulya* is left untreated many diseases may be arisen out. *Prameha*, *Pramehapidika*, *Jwara*, *Bhagandar*, *Vidradhi*, *Vatakara*, *Udara Roga*, *Urustambha*, *Shwasa*, *Apachi*, *Kasa*, *Sanyasa*, *Kushtha*, *Visarpa*, *Atisara*, *Arsha*, *Shilpada*, *Kamala*, *Mutrakriccha*, *Ajirna*.

Sadhya – Asadhyata

Regarding *Sthaulya*, most of the *Acharyas* have described bad prognosis and *Sahaja Sthaulya* is considered incurable.

Sthaulya Treatment-

The first line treatment of *Sthaulya* is to avoid those factors which are responsible for the causation of *Sthaulya*. *Nitya Langhan* therapy and *Langhana* even in *Shishir Ritu*. *Shadavidha Upakrama*, *Langhana* and *Rukshana* therapies are more suitable for management of *Sthaulya*.

Therapy, including *Vaman*, *Virechana*, *Ruksha Niruha*, *Raktamokshana* and *Shirovirechana*. Being a syndromic condition (*Bahudoshalakshanam*) *Sanshodhana* therapy is highly recommended for *Sthaulya* Patients possessing stamina and strength. *Ruksha Udavartana* is the *Bahya Shodhana* indicated for the management of *Sthaulya*. *Snehana Karma* is always restricted for the patient of *Sthaulya*; however, on exigency usage of *Taila* is recommended.

The therapy which neither expels the *Doshas* from body nor disturbs the homeostasis of *Doshas* is called *Shaman* and is of seven types. Among these seven *Upakramas* *Dipana*, *Pachana*, *Langhana* and *Rukshana* can be administered. Management of *Sthaulya* is quite difficult because both *Agni* and *Vayu* are in aggravated state.

Paschima Maruti. i.e. wind from western direction is *Meda Vishoshaka* due to its *Ruksha* Properties. *Katu*, *Tikta*, *Kashaya Rasa*, *Laghu*, *Ushna*, *Ruksha*, *Tikshna*, *Sara*, *Kathina*, *Vishada*, *Khara*, *Sukshma Gunas* and *Dashavidha Langhan* therapy can be used for the treatment of *Sthaulya*.

Intake of medicine before meals is insisted. It has been further elaborated to take *Lekhan* drugs on empty stomach in early morning and before meals.

Medications- *Kulitha*, *Satu*, *Mudga*, *Madhu mishrit Jala*, upper liquid watery part of curd, *Takra*, *Arishta*, *Mustadikwatha*, *Agnimantha Moola kwatha*, *Vyoshadisattu*, *Kanchanarguggulu*, *Trifala* at *udanaka* with *Ghrit*, *Trifala guggul*, *Medoharguggulu*;

Guduchi, *Haritaki*, *Musta* or *Trifala* with honey;

Brihat Panchamoola, *Shilajeeta* or *Guggulu* with *Agnimantha Swarasa*;

Vidanga, *Shunthi*, *Yavakshara*, *Satu* and *Amalaki Churna* with honey;

Trikatu, *Kutaki*, *Shigrurootwaka*, *Ativisha*, *Hingu*, *Sauwarchala*, *Jiraka*, *yavani*, *Dhanyaka*, *Chitraka*, *Hridra*,

Daruharidra, *Hapusha*, *Patharoot* and *Kembukachurna* with ghee and oil, *Shodashagunasatu* flour and honey.

This the Management of *Sthaulya* by oral administration of mentioned drugs.

Discussion

The obesity management should be gradual, well-engineered process involving diet, a tailor-made fitness regime, counselling and effective *Ayurvedic* interventions and medications. Each individual's body differs from each other and needs a separate medication designed according to their *Dosh-Dushti*. Prevention of obesity by studying the ancient method can be helpful to decrease the chronic and acute risk factors.

Conclusion

- In pathogenesis of *Sthaulya*, *Agni* and *Medo dhatu* are two main responsible factors.
- It has been mentioned by *Acharya Charak* in *Ashtauinditya Purushadhyaya*.
- *Sthaulya* is another term, which is used for the disease *Medoroga*.
- *Madhavkar* has described *Medoroga* under the individual entity and used *Medosvina*, *Atisthula* and *Sthula* words as the synonyms.
- *Charaka* has mentioned the *Beejadoshas* as one of the important etiological factors besides other of the disease.
- The term '*Sthula*' itself indicates the deposition of *Prithvi* and *Jala* *Mahabhuta* dominant factor in the body.
- *Nidana* of *Sthaulya* is divided in 4 categories viz. *Aharatmak*, *Viharatmak*, *Manasa* and *Anyas*.
- Most of the symptoms are related to abundant growth of *Medo dhatu* in the body.
- In the disease *Sthaulya*, *agni* occurs in the *tikshna* form; *Jatharagni* is found in excessive condition whereas *Medo dhatu* is found in *manda* condition; due to *Avarana* of *Vayu*. So the human indulges into eating more food, which produces excessive *Meda*; therefore, the vitiated cycle goes on.
- The cycle is interfered by the *Tikta*, *katu*, *Kashaya rasa* and *Rukshaguna Pradhan* Drugs; *Panchavidha Kashaya kalpa* and *Pnachakarma*.

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