



Review Article

## AN ELIXIR EFFECT OF DIET ON *STHOULYA (MEDOROGA)* IN AYURVEDA

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*Ahara*, *Sthoulya*, *Medoroga*,  
Obesity, Diet.

### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the ancient holistic science of life which gives us most detailed information on different *Ahara* (Diet) and lifestyles to be followed in different disease conditions as well as to maintain the optimum health of a healthy human being. Ayurveda states in full detail about the specific *Ahara* and lifestyles to be followed during different seasons under different climate circumstances and for different diseases. Ayurveda has scientific approach in planning the *Ahara*; therefore Acharya Charaka has included *Ahara* as first among the three supporting pillars of life. *Ahara* is an important component for the management of a disease in the same way as *Ahara* is considered as an important aid to protect the life and health. *Sthoulya* (Obesity/*Medoroga*) is a burning problem in present era due to improper *Ahara* and luxurious and competitive lifestyle. People have neither time nor interested to follow the dietetic regimens as well as daily regimens and seasonal regimens as described in classical texts of the Ayurveda.

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### INTRODUCTION

The growth of the human body and occurrence of any disease in healthy body depends upon *Ahara*. Acharya Charaka has included *Ahara* as first among the three supporting pillars (*Trayaupastambha*) of life.<sup>[1]</sup> Improper food intake and mode of life styles are the main factors for health hazards. People are not taking good care in their *Ahara* because of hectic work schedules or some other reasons. At present time, science is developing in a notable pace and rhythm as well as the number of health issues also increasing. The formation of tissue elements and various metabolic products depends upon the food, which is taken by us. The food provides nourishment to our body tissues through various systemic micro channels named as "*Srotasa*". Food is an important factor, which decides that whether the body is able to sustain the disease of body and as well as mind. Food is the main reason behind the origin of life and as well as the disease.<sup>[2]</sup> In modern era, obesity has emerged as serious health issue in both developing and developed nations and it is recognized as one of the most serious public health problem. *Sthoulya* is a *Medovaha srotogata* disease. Due to occurrence of

obstruction of body channels by excessive *Meda* the proper movement of *Vata Dosha* is specially confined to *Kostha* (Abdominal viscera) resulting in the stimulation of digestive power and absorption of *Ahara*, so the person digests the *Ahara* quickly and becomes a voracious eater.<sup>[3]</sup> In this condition *Kapha Dosha* and *Meda Dhatu* alleviating *Ahara* is taken by the person. According to Acharya Charaka the person who, having well proportioned in flesh, compactness, firmness in all sensory organs and it is not overpowered by the violence of any disease. The person having well-knit musculature has the extreme power of tolerance of hunger, thirst, heat and cold, strain of exercise, balanced *Agni* (Digestive and Assimilatory Power) and normal metabolism.<sup>[4]</sup>

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To study the Ayurvedic concept of *Sthoulya* (*Medoroga*) as mentioned in various classical Ayurveda texts.

To study the dietetic approach for the management of *Sthoulya* (*Medoroga*) as described in classical literatures of Ayurveda.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS****Nidana (etiology)**

*Acharya Charaka* has mentioned in the *Sutrasthana* of *Charaka Samhita* that obesity is result of over-saturation, excessive intake of heavy (takes longer time to digest), sweet (*Madhura Rasa Ahara*), cold and fatty (unctuous) diet, sleeping in day time, exhilaration (continuous cheerfulness), lack of exercise, lack of mind work, by inherited tendency (genetical factors).<sup>[5]</sup>

*Ahara Rasa* plays a major key role for increasing *Meda Dhatu* in *Sthoulya*. *Acharya Sushruta* has described that *Sthoulya* and *Karshya* depend upon the quality and quantity of *Ahara Rasa*.<sup>[6]</sup> On the basis of *Samanya Vishesh Siddhanta*, *Dravya Samanya* (the excessive food consumption

of similar substance), *Guna Samanya* (similar quality) or *Karma Samanya* (similar in action) can cause over production of *Dhatu*.<sup>[7]</sup>

The etiological factors described by *Acharyas*, can be classified under four groups i.e.,

1. *Dosha Dooshtikaratva- Guru, Madhura, Sheeta Guna* dominant diet.
2. *Dhatu Daurbalyakaratva/Khavaigunyakaratva - Avyayama, Avyavaya, Achintana, Nityaharsh* etc.
3. *Agnimandyakaratva- Over eating, Madhura Rasa and Snigdha Guna* dominant food intake.
4. *Beeja Dosha-* It impairs *Medodhatvagni Poshakansha* and ultimately provides the base for accumulation of *Ama* in *Meda Dhatu*, which leads to *Sthoulya*.

**Table 1: Aharaj Nidana: Diets responsible for causing Sthoulya**

S.No.	Aharaj Nidana	Ch. [8,9]	Su. [10,11]	A.H[12,13]	Y.R[14]	B.P[15]	M.N. [16]
1.	Atisampurnata (Over Eating)	+	+	+	-	-	-
2.	Adhyashana	-	+	-	-	-	-
3.	Guru Ahara (Excessive use of Foods which are Heavy in Nature)	+	-	-	-	-	-
4.	Madhur Ahara Sevana (Excessive use of Sweet Foods)	+	-	+	-	+	+
5.	Sheeta Ahara Sevana (Excessive use of Foods which are Cold in Nature)	+	-	-	-	-	-
6.	Snigdha Ahara Sevana (Excessive use of Foods which are Unctous and Moist in Nature)	+	-	+	-	+	+
7.	Navanna Sevana (Fresh Crops)	+	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Nava Madhya Sevana (Freshly made Alcoholic Preparations Crops)	+	-	-	-	-	-
9.	Gramya Mansa Rasa Sevana	+	-	-	-	-	-
11.	Audaka Mansa Rasa Sevana (Consumption of Meat Soups of Watery Animals)	+	-	-	-	-	-
12.	Mansa Sevana	+	-	+	-	-	-
13.	Dadhi Sevana	+	-	-	-	-	-
14.	Ghrita Sevana	+	-	+	-	-	-
15.	Payas Vikara Sevana (Extreme Consumption of Milk Products)	+	-	+	-	-	-
16.	Ikshu Sevana	+	-	-	-	-	-
17.	Nava Shali Sevana	+	-	-	-	-	-
18.	Masha Sevana	+	-	-	-	-	-
19.	Godhuma Sevana	+	-	-	-	-	-
20.	Ikshuras Vikara Sevana (Consumption of Sugarcane Products)	+	-	-	-	-	-

22.	<i>Shleshmala Ahara Sevana (Kapha Dosh Aggravating Foods)</i>	-	+	+	+	+	+
23.	<i>Bhojanottara Jalapana</i>	-	-	-	+	+	-

Ch. = Charaka Samhita, Su. = Sushruta Samhita, A.H. = Ashtanga Hridaya, Y.R. = Yoga Ratnakara, B.P. = Bhavaprakasha, M.N. = Madhava Nidana.

**Table 2: Cumulative concluded factors of diet as Aharaj Nidanas for Sthoulya have following Properties almost like**

<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Madhura Rasa Pradhana</i>
<i>Guna</i>	<i>Guru, Sheeta, Snigdha, Abhishyandi</i>
<i>Virya</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>
<i>Vipaka</i>	<i>Madhura</i>
<i>Dosha</i>	<i>Kapha Vridhdhikar</i>
<i>Panchabhautikata</i>	<i>Prithvi+ Jala Mahabhoota Dominant</i>
<i>Karma</i>	<i>Brihana, Dhatu - Mala Vardhaka, Balya, Vrishya, Rasayana</i>

**Poorvaroopa**

According to Acharya Vagbhata, Poorvaroopa is described as the disease which is under the process of manifestation but is not completely manifested due to less affinity of Doshas and it is not certain that which of the Dosha is responsible for the disease, this stage is called as Poorvaroopa.<sup>[17]</sup>

Poorvaroopa of Sthoulya has not been mentioned in the any of the classical text of Ayurveda. Although, the symptoms of Medovaha Srotodushti are described as Poorvaroopa of Prameha which can be considered as Poorvaroopa of Sthoulya also, because Bahudrava Shleshma and Abaddha Meda are the two components vitiated in pathogenesis of Prameha as well as Sthoulya.<sup>[18]</sup> So, the symptoms of Medovaha Srotodushti like Alasya, Sharira Shaithilya, Angadargandhya, Nidra, Tandra, Sluggish movement) can be considered as Poorvaroopa of Sthoulya.

**Roopa (Symptoms)**

Continuous use of the Nidanas as described above previously manifestation is started and after the completion of Dosha-Dooshya Sammurchhna i.e. the proper interactions occurs in between the Dosha and Dooshya the characteristics which are involved to manifested the disease are known as Roopa. Symptoms of Sthoulya may not be observed always, but they appear at various stages in different individuals. Manifestation of Roopa is associated with either excessive accumulation of Meda Dhatu or diminished nourishment of other Dhatu or obstruction in various Srotasa by Meda janya Margaravarodha or Ama or vitiation of Vata and Kapha Dosha. Acharya Charaka has narrated cardinal symptoms of Sthoulya as a Chala Sphika, Chala Udara, Chala Stana, Ayatha Upachaya and Anutsah.<sup>[19]</sup>

**Table 3: Symptoms of Sthoulya described by various Acharyas are tabulated as below**

No.	Rupa	Ch. <sup>[20]</sup>	Su. <sup>[21]</sup>	A.S. <sup>[22]</sup>	Y.R. <sup>[23]</sup>	B.P. <sup>[24]</sup>	M.N. <sup>[25]</sup>
1.	<i>Alpayu</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
2.	<i>Javoparodha</i>	+	-	+	-	-	-
3.	<i>Kricchavyavayata</i>	+	+	-	+	+	+
4.	<i>Daurbalyam</i>	+	-	+	-	-	-
5.	<i>Dargandhyam</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
6.	<i>Swedabadhah</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
7.	<i>Kshudhadhikya</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
8.	<i>Trishadhikya</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
9.	<i>Chal Sphika</i>	+	-	+	+	+	+
10	<i>Chal Udara</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+

11.	<i>Chala Stana</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
12.	<i>Utsahahani</i>	+	-	+	+	+	+
13.	<i>Ayathopchaya</i>	+	-	+	+	+	+
14.	<i>Kshudrashwasa</i>	-	+	+	+	+	+
15.	<i>Nidradhikya</i>	+	-	+	+	+	+
16.	<i>Krathana</i>	-	+	-	+	+	+
17.	<i>Gatrasada</i>	-	+	-	+	+	+
18.	<i>Gadgadatva</i>	-	+	+	-	-	-
19.	<i>Sarvakriyasu Asamarthata</i>	-	+	-	+	+	+
20.	<i>Moha</i>	-	-	-	+	+	+
21.	<i>Udar Vriddhi</i>	-	+	-	+	+	+
22.	<i>Parsva Vriddhi</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-
23.	<i>Kasa</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-
24.	<i>Jadyam</i>	-	-	+	-	-	-

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### Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

Samprapti is the knowledge of the series of events arranged in a proper sequence during the manifestation of a disease's occurrence. Sthoulya has been mentioned as Dushya prevailing disorder i.e. Meda janya Vyadhi in following words. Medo Vriddhi is a complicated process. The Samprapti of Sthoulya Vyadhi has been discussed by Acharya Charaka as well as Acharya Sushruta. Acharya Charaka has accepted "Ahara" as most common and responsible pathogenic factor for Medo Vriddhi in Sthoulya. Due to obstruction of Srotasa by Meda, the Vata moving mainly into stomach, augments the Agni and absorbs the food. Thus the obese person digests food speedily and craves for food tremendously.<sup>[26]</sup> Over eating produces over growth of Meda Dhatu, this leads to Sthoulya. Ama is produced due to Kapha aggravating ahara, Adhyashana, lack of exercise, sleeping in day time. Ama moves about within the body through the channels. The Unctous component of that Ama causes Medo Vriddhi, which produces Sthoulya.<sup>[27]</sup>

### Samprapti Ghataka<sup>[28,29]</sup>

Dosha : Kapha- Kledaka Kapha

: Vata- Samana & Vyana Vayu

: Pitta-Pachaka Pitta

Dooshya : Meda, Mamsa, Rasa Dhatu

Agni : Jatharagni and Dhatvagni

(Medodhatvagni and Rasadhatvagni)

Srotasa: Medovaha, Mamsavaha, Rasavaha

Swedavaha, Udakavaha

Srotodooshti: Sanga (Margavrodha/ Obstructions)

Adhithana: Vapavahana, Medodharakala

Udbhavasthana : Amashaya

Roga Marga: Bahya Roga marga

Vyaktasthan: Sarvshaarira (Specially Sphika, Udara, Stana)

Swabhava: Chirakalika (Chronic)

### Treatment

According to Maharshi Charaka, such procedure, which bring the Dhatus in equilibrium, constitute the treatment of diseases.<sup>[30]</sup> Acharya Charaka has further amplified the scope of the term Chikitsa. The main aim in Sthoulya Chikitsa is not only removal of the causative factors of the disease, but also at the restore the natural properties and functions and maintain of the equilibrium Doshas.<sup>[31]</sup> According to Acharya Sushruta, first line of treatment for Sthoulya is to avoid the causative factors which are responsible for the occurrence of Sthoulya.<sup>[32]</sup> All the dietetic factors having Madhura Rasa, Guru, Snigdha and Sheeta Guna dominant should be avoided. Sthoulya is a Santarpanjanya (Disease caused by extreme Nutrition) disease. Apatarpana is a suitable treatment of Santarpanjanya Diseases; but in the situation while treating Sthoulya; it is quite difficult because of both Agni and Vayu are in aggravated state. If Apatarpana is done, Vayu gets vitiated and Agni starts burning other Dhatus and if Santarpana is done the disease will be aggravated. So Guru, Ruksha and Ushna properties of Aharas and Apatarpana is done by Guru Dravyas that means Guru Apatarpana<sup>[33]</sup> as well as perspective Viharas are most suitable to breakdown the Samprapti

(Pathogenesis) by reducing vitiated *Vata*, *Kapha* and *Meda* at a time. To maintain and regulate the equilibrium of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* especially *Samana Vayu*, *Pachaka Pitta* and *Kledaka Kapha*

along with reduction of *Meda Dhatu* by influencing *Medodhatvagni* is the main goal to achieve in treatment of *Sthoulya*.

**Table 4: Ahara used in the Management of Sthoulya**

S.No.	Ahara Dravya	Ch. <sup>[34]</sup>	Su. <sup>[35]</sup>	A.H. <sup>[36]</sup>	Y.R. <sup>[37]</sup>	B.P. <sup>[38]</sup>	B.R. <sup>[39]</sup>
<b>Shooka Dhanya Varga Ahara (Cereals/Food Grains)</b>							
1.	<i>Prashatika</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-
2.	<i>Priyangu</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
3.	<i>Shyamaka</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
4.	<i>Yavaka</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-
5.	<i>Yava</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
6.	<i>Jurna</i>	+	-	+	-	-	-
7.	<i>Kodrava</i>	+	-	-	+	+	+
8.	<i>Nivara</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+
9.	<i>Kordooshaka</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-
10.	<i>Puran Shali</i>	-	-	-	+	+	+
11.	<i>Godhuma</i>	+	-	-	-	+	-
12.	<i>Laja</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+
<b>Shami Dhanya Varga Ahara (Pulses)</b>							
13.	<i>Mudga</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
14.	<i>Kullattha</i>	+	-	+	+	+	+
15.	<i>Chakramugaka</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-
16.	<i>Adhaki</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-
17.	<i>Chanaka</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+
18.	<i>Rajmasha</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-
19.	<i>Mashoor</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+
20.	<i>Uddalaka</i>	-	+	-	+	+	-
<b>Shaka Varga Ahara (Vegetables)</b>							
21.	<i>Patola</i>	+	-	-	-	-	-
22.	<i>Vartaka</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+
23.	<i>Patra Shaka</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+
<b>Phala Varga Ahara (Fruits)</b>							
24.	<i>Triphala</i>	+	+	+	-	-	+
25.	<i>Amalki Fruit Powder</i>	+	-	+	-	+	-
<b>Mansa Varga Ahara (Meats)</b>							
26.	<i>Chingati Matasya</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+
<b>Ksheera Varga Ahara (Milk and Milk Products)</b>							
27.	<i>Takra</i>	-	-	+	-	-	+
28.	<i>Mastu (Curd Water)</i>	-	-	+	-	+	-
<b>Madya Varga (Alcohol)</b>							
29.	<i>Sura</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+

<b>Madhu Varga (Honey)</b>							
30.	<i>Madhu</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
<b>Anyahara (Others)</b>							
31.	<i>Arista</i>	+	-	+	-	-	-
32.	<i>Ushna Jala</i>	-	-	-	+	-	+
33.	<i>Sarshapa Tail</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+
34.	<i>Tila Taila</i>	-	-	-	-	-	+

Ch. = Charaka Samhita, Su. = Sushruta Samhita, A.S. = Ashtanga Sangraha, Y.R. = Yoga Ratnakara, B.P. = Bhava prakasha, B.R.= Bhaisajya Ratnawali.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Acharya Charaka has mentioned in the *Sutrasthana* of *Charaka Samhita* that obesity is result of over-saturation, excessive intake of heavy (takes longer time to digest), sweet (*Madhura Rasa Ahara*), cold and fatty (Unctuous) diet, sleeping in day time, exhilaration (Continuous Cheerfulness), lack of exercise, lack of mind work, by inherited tendency (genetical factors).<sup>[39]</sup> *Ahara Rasa* plays a major key role for increasing *Meda Dhatu* in *Sthoulya*. Acharya Sushruta has described that *Sthoulya* and *Karshya* depend upon the quality and quantity of *Ahara Rasa*.<sup>[40]</sup> All the dietetic factors having *Madhura Rasa*, *Guru*, *Snigdha* and *Sheeta Guna* dominant should be avoided in the condition of *Sthoulya*. So *Guru*, *Ruksha* and *Ushna* properties of *Aharas* as well as *Viharas* are most suitable to breakdown the series of events of the pathogenesis by reducing vitiated *Vata*, *Kapha* and *Meda* at same time without disturbing the equilibrium. According to Acharya Sushruta First line of treatment for *Sthoulya* is to avoid the causative factors which are responsible for the occurrence of *Sthoulya*. Along with this speciality of practicing wholesome diet for the obese person, there is no need of medication because the *Ahara* plays an important role in the removal and subsiding of the vitiated *Doshas* as well as the disease from the body. In the same way taking of the class of things that are considered wholesome or hurtful in disease ends the object of using medicine. It means although a patient is taking the best available medicines for healing and cure but when he does not care about his ethics of *Ahara* in that situation the practicing of any medication proves itself unsuccessful to cure the disease.<sup>[41]</sup> So the importance of *Ahara* (Wholesome Diet) is greater than from any medicine. According to holistic approach of *Ayurveda* to follow the ethics, rules and regulation as described in the classical texts plays an important key role to achieve good health, fitness and quality of life and helpful for the management of *Sthoulya*.

## CONCLUSION

Obesity has become the chief burning health issue in India as well as across the whole world. "Ahara" is most common and responsible pathogenic factor for *Medo Vriddhi* in *Sthoulya*. First line of treatment for *Sthoulya* is to avoid the causative factors which are responsible for the occurrence of *Sthoulya*. All the dietetic factors having *Madhura Rasa*, *Guru*, *Snigdha* and *Sheeta Guna* dominant should be avoided. So *Guru*, *Ruksha* and *Ushna* properties of *Aharas* as well as *Viharas* are most suitable to breakdown the *Samprapti* (Pathogenesis) by reducing vitiated *Vata*, *Kapha* and *Meda* at a time. When the Daily regimens and seasonal regimens as described in classics are followed along with proper food intake leads to achieve good health status and physic in obese condition.

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