Jirnashan - A definite way to overcome the Obesity (Sthaulya)

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Abstract:

Sthaulya (obesity) is major increasing problem all over the world which is very prevalent in younger generation too. Drugs such as serotonergic & catecholaminergic are used in modern medicine in spite of their side effects. Bariatric surgery, sauna bath which reduces the size of abdomen but it is all transitional. Sthaulya Chikitsa (obesity treatment) is elaborated in ancient text, under the context of Shodhan Chikitsa (body purificatory procedure) and Shaman Chikitsa (Palliative treatment). Shodhan therapy, Vaman/Virechan/Lekhan Basti and Shaman Chikitsa including various Medoghna Aushadhis (Lipid pacifying medicines) are also proven to be effective. All these treatment are considered under Apatarpan Chikitsa (reduction therapy) which has its own importance in reducing obesity. But still the problem persists because of sedentary life style and wrong food habits. If the management of obesity is carried out with Apatarpan Chikitsa along with adopting healthy eating habits such as Jirnashan (After digestion of previously consumed food). The result would be much more encouraging with minimal relapse. Charaka emphasizes on Jirnashana as a line of treatment in Santarpanjanya Vyadhi (diseases due to over consumption of food and sedentary life style) including Sthaulya indirectly suggesting that Ajirnashana is one of the important but most neglected cause for the same.

Keywords- Sthaulya, Obesity, Ayurveda, Jirnashan

Introduction:

Obesity is a major health threat. People with obesity are at high risk for so many diseases such as osteoarthritis, coronary heart disease, dyslipidemia, hypertension, diabetes mellitus etc. [1] More ever the report shows that obesity is killing about 2, 20,000 men and women a year in the United States of America and Canada alone, and about 3,20,000 in 20 countries of Western Europe.[2] There are two major reasons causing obesity which have been globally accepted, one is an increased intake of energy-dense foods that are high in fat, salt and sugars but low in vitamins, minerals and other micronutrients; and, another one is decrease in physical activity due to the increasingly sedentary nature of many forms of work, changing modes of transportation, and increasing urbanization[3]

In Ayurveda, Sthaulya (Obesity) has been described since very early days in various Samhitas, Sangraha Granthas etc. Charaka has described Sthaulya among the eight undesirable physical constitutions. [4] It has also been described as Santarpanajanita Roga as well as a Kaphaj
Nanatmaj Vikara (disease due to vitiation of Kapha). [5][6] Although various drugs & management have been suggested for obesity. Besides dietary restrictions & exercise, use of drug has been considered to provide an answer to this grave problem. Now a day, in modern medicine, drugs prescribed for weight reduction includes anorectics, oral hypoglycemic agents, metabolic stimulators, laxatives, diuretics & few hormones. Though these drugs have beneficial effect up to limited extent but they are liable to produce side effects such as nervousness, restlessness, insomnia, dizziness, palpitation & gastric irritation etc which restrict their use. [7] In Ayurveda, Sthaulya is treated by Shodhana Chikitsa such as Vaman (therapeutic emesis), Virechana (Therapeutic purgation), Lekhan Basti (Lipid pacifying medicated enema) & Shaman Chikitsa including various Medoghna Aushadhis. It is clear that all these treatment modalities are coming under Apatarpan Chikitsa which has its own importance in reducing obesity. But if such line of treatment would be done along with Jirna-ashan may produce encouraging results & chance of relapse may be minimized. Hence the present review is carried out to understand the concept of Jirnashan which may be helpful while treating the Sthaulya.

Material and Methods:

Classical texts of Ayurveda were studied for references regarding Sthaulya. These references were compiled, analyzed, and discussed for a thorough and in-depth understanding of role of Jirnashan in treating Sthaulya.

Observations:

Etiological factors:

Sthaulya is caused by over saturation of food; intake of heavy, sweet, cold & fatty diet, excessive consumption of new cereals, fresh wine, meat of marshy and aquatic animals, milk and its products, jaggery and flour preparations. At the same time abstains from physical movements including day sleep, comfortable beds and seats, abstinence from sexual intercourse, cheerfulness, lack of mental exercise, heredity.etc all these are responsible for provocation of Kapya (End product of water metabolism)-Meda (Lipid) [8][9]

Ajirnashan underestimated cause in Sthaulya:

According to Acharya Sushruta, Sthulata Karshyata (under weight), & Madhyasharirtvam (healthy built) should be ascribed to changes in the condition of Samvak Rasa Dhatu (Proper formation of first bodily tissue after food metabolism) [10] which depends on Aharavidhi Vihehatayana (Food consumed by observing the rules and the procedures of taking food). [11] Adhyashana (Overconsumption) is one of the cause for Sthaulya mentioned by Sushruta on which Dalhana has commented that, Adhyashana is habit of pampering one's belly before digestion of previous meal i.e. Ajirnabhojana Abbyas. [12] Continuous Ajirnabhojana Abhyas leads to Grahani Dushti (duodenum derangement) [13] after which not only Kaphamedovardhak Laghu Bhojana (heavy diet) but also Laghu Bhojana (light diet) cannot be digested resulting in Aama Rasa (undigested material in the body) which is overall end cause of Sthaulya. Hence Adhyashan means Ajirna-bhojanabhyas which is the most important cause of obesity and is always neglected.

Concept of Adhyashan:

Word Adhyashana is made of two words Adhi and Ashana. The collective meaning of both the terms is to eat after eating. The definition of the word Adhyashana is given by various classics of Ayurveda, which in a nut shell means eating before the digestion of previous food.

According to the principles of Ayurveda, one should take food only after complete digestion of previous food. [14-16] Adhyashana therefore is described as a wrong habit of eating and also mentioned as the causative factor of many diseases including Sthaulya. There is no direct reference available that show how Adhyashana produces a hazardous effect. But it can be understood on the basis of Aamavisha Samprapti. (Pathogenesis of formation of undigested material in the body which acts as poison) [18] Charaka in the description of Aaharavidhi Vishesha Aayatana stated that Adhyashan immediately provokes all the three Doshas (humors) which ultimately cause acute as well as chronic diseases.[19]

By considering all references, it can be stated that, Adhyashan is not only excessive eating of food or taking food after completing lunch or dinner but beyond this Ajirnabhojanabhyas is also
one form of Adhyashan which is also a definite but always neglected cause in many obese people. If person taking Kaph-Medovardhak Ahar without doing any exercise continuously, will be responsible for Agnidushti (vitiation of digestive power) as Kaph Medovardhak Aahar (diet) is predominantly with Prithvi & Jala Mahabhuta (basic element i.e. earth and water) which is against of Tejomahabhut (basic element i.e. fire) of Jatharagni (digestive power). If this process is going on continuously it is manifested as Grahanidushti (vitiation of duodenum which is place of i.e bioenergy) which induce assimilation disorders. [20] Vitiated Jatharagni cannot digest even small amount of food, which ultimately produce Aam ras (undigested material) having poisonous like property: [21] Dushta Ras which is produced due to Adhyashan is responsible for the Sthaulya pathogenesis as Sthaulya is “Rasanimitavecha”.

Jirnashan underestimated treatment in Sthaulya:

The first line of treatment in any disease is Nidan Pariwarjan (Avoiding causative factors). As previously observed that, Ajirnashan and Adhyashan are underestimated causes for Sthaulya hence avoiding Ajirnashan and adopting Jirnashan may be an ideal approach in managing Sthaulya. This is substantiated by the Charaka in context of Sthaulya treatment emphasizing on Jirnashan which is considered as a part of treatment of Sthaulya reflecting that Ajiranshan is the main cause for all Santarpanjanya diseases like Sthaulya.

Role of Jirnashan in Sthaulya as treatment:

Charaka mentioned “Vyyamnityo Jirnashi” in context of Sthaulya Chikitsa emphasizing on Jirnashan which is considered as part of treatment of Sthaulya. As Ajirnashan is main cause for all Santarpanjanya diseases like in Sthaulya.

Exact time for taking food:

If Jirnashan treatment has to be implement into Sthaulya chikitsa. It is prime importance to understand the symptoms of Jirna ahar (digested food) to avoid the Ajirnashan. This has been greatly elaborated by Vaghbhatta. He has mentioned some indicator to demonstrate the ideal time for taking meal. Person consumes the food after the elimination of feaces, and urine, when the mind is clean (devoid of emotions), when Doshas (urine, feaces, sweat) are moving in their natural paths (functioning normally), when belching is pure (without any foul smell or taste), when hunger is well manifest, When flatus is moving downward easily, when digestive activity is keen, when the sense organs are clear (functioning), when the body is light.[25] Food should be consumed observing above said signs and symptoms following the rules and the procedures of taking food which is ideal time.

Discussion

Sthaulya, is prevalent in all the age group and especially in younger population. It is due to changes in life style including wrong dietary habits and sedentary work. As most of the obese people are very conscious about their big shape & do take all the efforts to lose their weight except Jirnashana. This may be due to lack of knowledge and its good effects regarding the same among discard community. Sushruta mentioned various causative factors for Sthaulya including Adhyashana. Term Adhyashana has various shades of wrong eating habits like excessive eating of food / further pampering of belly by foodstuff after completing lunch / dinner or taking of food before digestion of prior meal. Such a wrong dietary habits routinely practiced by the obese people. If it would be going on continuously, it disturbs the function of Grahani resulting in Jathargnimandya (Hypoactivity of digestive power) which ultimately produce Amarasa. Rasa which is mixed with Ama, root cause of Sthaulya resulted due to wrong eating habits, which is always neglected in a clinical practice. Charaka, while describing the treatment of Sthaulya, emphasizes on Jirnashana along with Apatarpan Chikitsa suggesting the importance of healthy eating habits. Nidan parivarjan is the first and supreme treatment which is not adopting these days as it requires detail knowledge about nidana (Causative factors) and its role in various diseases. Wrong dietary habits such as Ajirnashana, Adhyashan etc plays as important role in various disease pathologies which is reflected in various chapters of samhita. Hence, by observing the importance of Jirnahr, it can be used as an important treatment modality and be successfully implemented to deal Sthaulya.
Conclusion:

While dealing with any Santarpanjanya Vyadhi including Sthaulya, identification of causative factors is very essential. Obesity is lifestyle disorder where, obese person always neglect to adopt healthy eating habits Jirnashan. If it is implicated with other treatment modality it will surely be boon for obese person.

References: