

Review Article

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A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF *ATISTHAULYA* IN *AYURVEDA* WITH REFERENCE TO LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

Dr. Shivangi Tiwari¹, Dr Vikas Kumar Sharma², Dr. Seethal M C³

¹PG Scholar Department of Samhita evam Siddhanta, Kunwar Shekhar Vijendra Ayurved Medical College & Research Center, Gangoh, Saharanpur, UP

²Professor, Department of Samhita Evam Siddhant, Kunwar Shekhar Vijendra Ayurved Medical College and Research Centre, Gangoh Saharanpur, UP

³Assistant Professor, Dept of Samhita Sidhanta & Sanskrit, KSV AMC and RC Gangoh, Saharanpur, UP

Corresponding Author - Dr. Shivangi Tiwari, PG Scholar Department of Samhita evam Siddhanta, Kunwar Shekhar Vijendra Ayurved Medical College & Research Center, Gangoh Saharanpur, UP

Email id - Shivangitiwari02april@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background *Atisthaulya* (obesity) is described in Ayurveda as a *Santarpanajanya Vyadhi*, arising due to excessive nourishment and improper lifestyle practices. In the present era, lifestyle disorders such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and metabolic syndrome are increasing rapidly due to sedentary habits, faulty diet, and psychological stress. Ayurveda provides a detailed understanding of *Atisthaulya* through concepts like *Medo Dhatu Vriddhi*, *Atiagni*, and *Srotorodha*, which closely resemble modern metabolic disturbances. **Aim** To explore the conceptual understanding of *Atisthaulya* in Ayurveda and correlate it with modern lifestyle disorders. **Objectives** To describe the Ayurvedic concept of *Atisthaulya*. To analyze etiological factors (*Nidana*) and pathogenesis (*Samprapti*). To correlate *Atisthaulya* with modern lifestyle disorders. To highlight preventive and therapeutic approaches in Ayurveda **Materials and Methods** This is a conceptual and literary review based on classical Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with relevant modern medical literature on obesity and lifestyle disorders. Data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted to establish Ayurvedic and modern correlations. **Results** *Atisthaulya* is primarily caused by excessive intake of *Guru*, *Snigdha*, *Madhura Ahara*, lack of

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physical activity, and psychological factors. These lead to *Atiagni* and accumulation of *Meda Dhatu*, resulting in *Srotorodha* and imbalance of *Vata*. The condition shows strong similarity with modern obesity and associated metabolic disorders such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and dyslipidemia. Ayurveda emphasizes *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Langhana*, *Lekhana*, and lifestyle modification as key management principles. **Conclusion** *Atisthaulya* is a significant metabolic disorder described in Ayurveda with a well-defined etiopathogenesis and management strategy. Its strong correlation with modern lifestyle disorders highlights the relevance of Ayurvedic principles in prevention and management through dietary regulation, physical activity, and holistic interventions.

Keywords *Atisthaulya*, *Medo Dhatu*, *Atiagni*, Lifestyle Disorders, Obesity, *Santarpanajanya Vyadhi*

INTRODUCTION

Atisthaulya is one of the important disorders described in Ayurveda under *Santarpanajanya Vyadhi*, which arises due to excessive nourishment and improper lifestyle practices. It is characterized by abnormal increase in *Meda Dhatu*, leading to excessive accumulation of fat in the body. Acharya Charaka has included *Sthoulya* among the eight undesirable conditions (*Ashta Nindita Purusha*), highlighting its clinical significance and associated complications. The condition not only affects physical appearance but also hampers functional efficiency and overall health status.¹

In Ayurveda, the pathogenesis of *Atisthaulya* is mainly attributed to *Atiagni* (diminished digestive and metabolic fire), which leads to improper metabolism and excessive formation of *Meda Dhatu*. The vitiated *Kapha Dosh* plays a dominant role, along with obstruction of body channels (*Srotorodha*) due to accumulated fat. This results in improper nourishment of other *Dhatus* and aggravation of *Vata*, creating a pathological cycle.² The classical features such as *Chala Sphika Udara Stana* (flabbiness of hips, abdomen, and breasts), *Atikshudha*, *Atipipasa*, and reduced physical activity clearly describe the clinical presentation of obesity.

In the modern era, *Atisthaulya* can be correlated with obesity, which is considered a major lifestyle disorder and a global health concern. Rapid urbanization, sedentary habits, excessive intake of calorie-rich foods, stress, and lack of physical exercise have significantly contributed to its rising prevalence. Obesity is strongly associated with metabolic disorders such as type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, dyslipidemia, cardiovascular diseases, and certain cancers. Thus, it represents not just a cosmetic issue but a serious medical condition affecting multiple systems of the body.³

Ayurveda provides a comprehensive approach for understanding and managing *Atisthaulya* through its unique concepts of *Nidana*, *Samprapti*, and *Chikitsa*. Emphasis is given on *Nidana Parivarjana* (avoidance of causative factors), dietary regulation, physical activity, and therapeutic measures like *Langhana* and *Lekhana*. The holistic approach of Ayurveda not only focuses on reducing excess fat but also aims at restoring metabolic balance and preventing recurrence.⁴ Therefore, revisiting the Ayurvedic perspective of *Atisthaulya* is highly relevant in the present context of increasing lifestyle disorders.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

To explore the conceptual understanding of *Atisthaulya* in Ayurveda and correlate it with modern lifestyle disorders.

Objectives

- To describe the Ayurvedic concept of *Atisthaulya*
- To analyze etiological factors (*Nidana*) and pathogenesis (*Samprapti*)
- To correlate *Atisthaulya* with modern lifestyle disorders
- To highlight preventive and therapeutic approaches in Ayurveda

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a conceptual and literary review based on classical Ayurvedic texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with their commentaries, to understand the concept of *Atisthaulya* in detail. Relevant information regarding *Nidana*, *Samprapti*, *Lakshana*, and *Chikitsa* of *Atisthaulya* was systematically collected and analyzed. In addition, modern medical literature, standard textbooks, and published research articles related to obesity and lifestyle disorders were reviewed to establish correlation. The collected data were critically evaluated and interpreted to present a comprehensive comparative understanding of *Atisthaulya* in Ayurveda with reference to contemporary lifestyle disorders.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF ATISTHAULYA

Atisthaulya is a well-described clinical condition in Ayurveda characterized by excessive and abnormal accumulation of *Meda Dhatu* resulting in increased body bulk and altered body proportions. Acharya Charaka has included *Sthoulya* under *Ashta Nindita Purusha*, emphasizing that such individuals are not only physically disproportionate but also prone to

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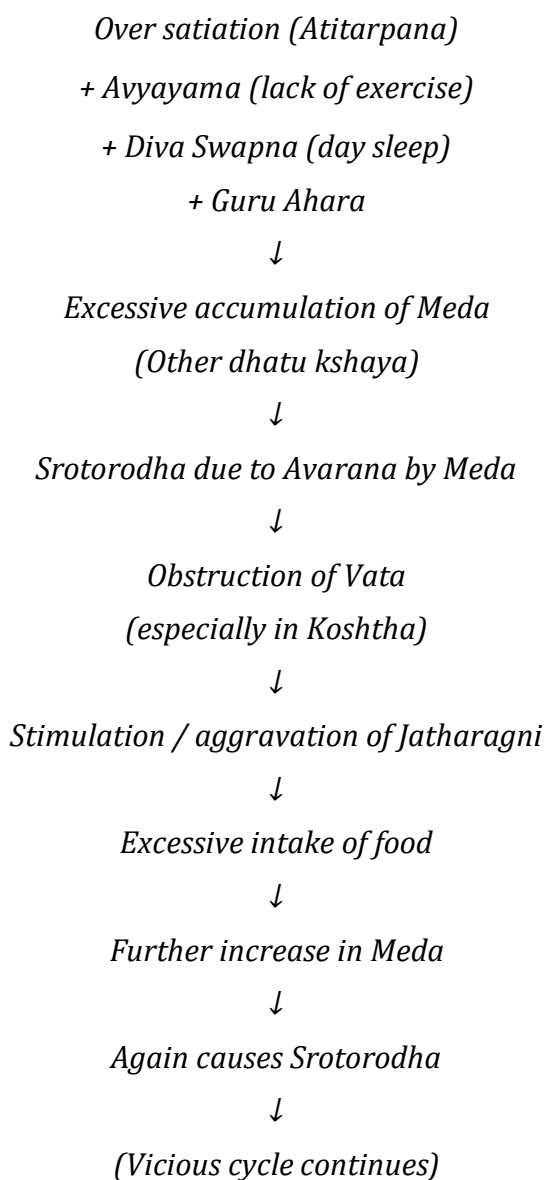
multiple systemic disorders and reduced life expectancy. The fundamental concept behind *Atisthaulya* lies in the deranged process of *Dhatu Poshana*, where the nutrients derived from *Ahara Rasa* are excessively diverted towards *Meda Dhatu* instead of nourishing all *Dhatus* in a balanced manner. This selective over-nourishment leads to pathological obesity. Thus, *Atisthaulya* is not merely an increase in body weight but a metabolic and structural disorder affecting the entire physiological equilibrium.⁵

Nidana (Etiological Factors)

The etiological factors of *Atisthaulya* are predominantly related to faulty dietary habits and improper lifestyle. Excessive consumption of *Guru* (heavy), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Madhura* (sweet), and *Sheeta Ahara* leads to aggravation of *Kapha Dosha* and promotes *Meda Vriddhi*. Overeating (*Adhyashana*), frequent eating without proper digestion of previous food, intake of high-calorie, fatty, and sugary substances further contribute to the pathology. Lifestyle factors such as lack of physical activity (*Avyayama*), excessive day sleep (*Divaswapna*), sedentary habits, prolonged sitting, and indulgence in comfort-oriented lifestyle play a crucial role. Psychological factors like stress-free indulgent behavior, lack of discipline, and excessive satisfaction also enhance the tendency of fat accumulation. Additionally, genetic predisposition (*Beeja Dosha*) and constitutional factors (*Prakriti*, especially *Kapha Pradhana*) are considered important contributors. All these factors collectively lead to disturbance of *Agni* and promote abnormal metabolism.⁶

Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

The pathogenesis of *Atisthaulya* is complex and revolves around *Atiagni* and *Meda Dhatu Dushti*. Due to continuous intake of causative factors, *Jatharagni* becomes impaired, leading to incomplete digestion and improper transformation of food. This results in increased production of *Meda Dhatu*. The excessive *Meda* accumulates in the body and causes *Srotorodha* (obstruction of microchannels), particularly affecting *Medovaha Srotas*. This obstruction hampers the normal circulation and distribution of nutrients, leading to undernourishment of other *Dhatus*. The obstructed channels disturb the normal movement of *Vata Dosha*, causing its aggravation. The aggravated *Vata* stimulates appetite (*Atikshudha*) and thirst (*Atipipasa*), leading to excessive intake of food and further accumulation of fat. Thus, a vicious cycle is established involving *Atiagni*, *Meda Vriddhi*, *Srotorodha*, and *Vata Prakopa*, which perpetuates the disease process and leads to progressive obesity.⁷



Lakshana⁸ (Clinical Features)

The clinical presentation of *Atisthaulya* is well described in classical texts. The most characteristic feature is *Chala Sphika Udara Stana*, which indicates pendulous movement of hips, abdomen, and breasts due to excessive fat deposition. Patients exhibit *Atikshudha* (increased appetite) and *Atipipasa* (excessive thirst), reflecting disturbed metabolic regulation. *Swedadhikya* (excessive sweating) and *Dourgandhya* (foul body odor) occur due to increased *Kapha* and *Meda*. There is a marked tendency towards lethargy, heaviness (*Gaurava*), reduced enthusiasm, and intolerance to physical exertion. Breathlessness on exertion, reduced mobility, and general fatigue are commonly observed. These features collectively indicate both structural and functional derangement in the body.

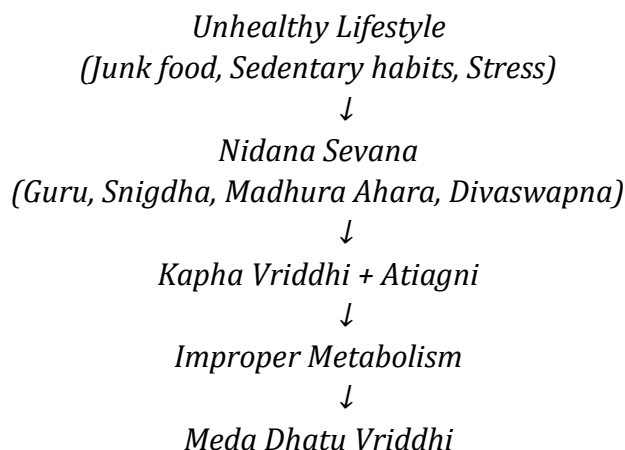
***Ashtadosha of Atisthaulya*⁹**

Acharya Charaka has elaborated eight specific defects (*Ashtadosha*) associated with *Sthoulya*, which reflect the severity and complications of the condition. These include *Ayusho Hras* (reduced lifespan), *Javoparodha* (decreased physical activity and agility), *Krichra Vyavayata* (difficulty in sexual activity), *Daurbalya* (general weakness), *Dourgandhya* (bad body odor), *Swedadhikya* (excessive sweating), *Atikshudha* (excessive hunger), and *Atipipasa* (excessive thirst). These defects highlight the systemic involvement of *Atisthaulya*, affecting physical strength, metabolic balance, reproductive capacity, and overall quality of life. They also indicate poor prognosis if the condition remains untreated.

***Chikitsa Siddhanta*¹⁰ (Principles of Management)**

The management of *Atisthaulya* in Ayurveda is based on correcting the underlying pathology rather than merely reducing body weight. The foremost principle is *Nidana Parivarjana*, which involves elimination of causative factors such as improper diet and sedentary habits. *Langhana* (lightening therapy) is employed to reduce excessive nourishment, while *Rukshana* (drying therapy) helps in counteracting the unctuous nature of *Meda*. *Lekhana* (scraping therapy) is specifically indicated to remove accumulated fat. Dietary modifications include intake of *Laghu*, *Ruksha*, and *Tikta-Katu-Kashaya Rasa* predominant food, along with restriction of *Madhura* and *Snigdha Ahara*. Regular physical exercise (*Vyayama*), avoidance of *Divaswapna*, and active lifestyle are essential components. Therapeutic procedures such as *Udvaartana* (dry powder massage), *Virechana*, and administration of *Lekhana Dravya* play a significant role in reducing *Meda Dhatu* and restoring metabolic balance.

ATISTHAULYA WITH LIFESTYLE DISORDERS





HYPERTENSION (HTN)

Hypertension is a chronic condition characterized by persistently elevated blood pressure levels, generally above 140/90 mmHg. It is often called a silent disease because many patients remain asymptomatic for a long time. In the context of *Atisthaulya*, excess *Meda Dhatu* leads to *Srotorodha*, increasing peripheral vascular resistance and thereby raising blood pressure. From an Ayurvedic perspective, it can be understood through *Raktagata Vata*, *Vyana Vayu Dushti*, and *Rakta Dushti*. Modern risk factors include sedentary lifestyle, high salt intake, stress, and obesity. If uncontrolled, it may lead to serious complications such as heart disease, stroke, and renal damage.

TYPE 2 DIABETES MELLITUS (DM TYPE 2)

Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus is a metabolic disorder characterized by insulin resistance and persistent hyperglycemia. It is strongly associated with obesity and sedentary habits. In Ayurveda, it closely correlates with *Madhumeha*, a subtype of *Prameha*, where *Kapha Dosha* and *Meda Dhatu Dushti* play a central role. Due to excessive accumulation of *Meda Dhatu*, the body's ability to utilize glucose becomes impaired, leading to increased blood sugar levels. Clinically, it presents with symptoms like frequent urination, excessive thirst, increased hunger, fatigue, and delayed wound healing. Long-term complications include neuropathy, nephropathy, retinopathy, and cardiovascular disorders.

DYSLIPIDEMIA

Dyslipidemia refers to abnormal levels of lipids in the blood, including elevated cholesterol, triglycerides, or low levels of HDL. It is a major risk factor for cardiovascular diseases. In Ayurveda, it is understood as *Medo Dhatu Dushti*, *Kapha Vriddhi*, and resultant *Srotorodha*. Excess intake of *Guru* and *Snigdha Ahara*, along with lack of physical activity, leads to improper metabolism and accumulation of lipids. This results in deposition of fatty substances in blood vessels, eventually causing atherosclerosis. Dyslipidemia is usually asymptomatic and detected through laboratory investigations but plays a crucial role in the development of heart disease and stroke.

TABLE - LIFESTYLE DISORDERS

S. No	Disease	Definition	Ayurvedic Correlation	Major Etiological Factors	Pathogenesis (Ayurveda + Modern)	Clinical Features	Complications
1	Hypertension (HTN)	Persistent elevation of blood pressure $\geq 140/90$ mmHg	<i>Rakta</i> , <i>Vata</i> , <i>Vyana</i> , <i>Vayu</i> , <i>Dushti</i> , <i>Rakta Dushti</i> , <i>Srotorodha</i>	Sedentary lifestyle, high salt intake, stress, obesity (<i>Atisthaulya</i>), alcohol, smoking	Excess <i>Meda Dhatu</i> → <i>Srotorodha</i> → increased vascular resistance → disturbed <i>Vata</i> → raised BP; Modern: increased peripheral resistance, arterial stiffness	Headache, dizziness, palpitations, fatigue, often asymptomatic	Stroke, myocardial infarction, kidney damage, heart failure
2	Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus	Metabolic disorder with insulin resistance	<i>Madhumeha</i> (under <i>Prameha</i>),	Excess <i>Madhura</i> , <i>Snigdha Ahara</i> , sedentary	<i>Meda Dhatu Vriddhi</i> → impaired <i>Agni</i> →	Polyuria, polydipsia, polyphagia, fatigue,	Neuropathy, nephropathy, retinopathy

		and hyperglycemia	<i>Kapha Pradhana Tridosha Dushti, Meda Dhatu Dushti</i>	life, obesity, genetic predisposition	improper glucose metabolism → <i>Kapha Dushti</i> → insulin resistance; Modern: decreased insulin sensitivity and beta-cell dysfunction	delayed wound healing	y, cardiovascular disease
3	Dyslipidemia	Abnormal lipid levels (↑ cholesterol, ↑ triglycerides, ↓ HDL)	<i>Medo Dhatu Dushti, Kapha Vriddhi, Srotorodha</i>	High-fat diet, sedentary habits, obesity (<i>Atisthaulya</i>), excessive <i>Snigdha</i> and <i>Guru Ahara</i>	Excess <i>Meda Dhatu</i> → lipid accumulation → <i>Srotorodha</i> ; Modern: increased LDL, triglycerides → plaque formation in vessels	Usually asymptomatic, detected on lab tests	Atherosclerosis, coronary artery disease, stroke

DISCUSSION

The present conceptual review highlights that *Atisthaulya* is not merely a condition of excess body weight but a complex metabolic disorder rooted in disturbed *Agni* and imbalance of *Dosha* and *Dhatu*. The central role of *Atiagni* in initiating the disease process reflects impaired digestion and metabolism, which leads to excessive formation of *Meda Dhatu*. The involvement of *Kapha Dosha* and subsequent *Srotorodha* further aggravates the condition, creating a pathological environment where normal physiological processes are disturbed.

This clearly indicates that Ayurveda views *Atisthaulya* as a systemic disorder rather than a localized accumulation of fat.¹¹

The pathogenesis described in Ayurveda shows a striking similarity with modern understanding of obesity and metabolic syndrome. The concepts of *Meda Vridhhi* and *Srotorodha* can be correlated with adipose tissue accumulation and metabolic dysfunction such as insulin resistance and impaired lipid metabolism.¹² The vicious cycle involving *Vata Avarana*, *Atikshudha*, and overeating reflects behavioral and hormonal dysregulation observed in obese individuals. Additionally, the description of *Ashtadosha* explains the multisystem involvement and complications, which are comparable to modern comorbidities like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases.

From a management perspective, Ayurveda provides a comprehensive and preventive approach for *Atisthaulya*. The emphasis on *Nidana Parivarjana* highlights the importance of eliminating causative factors, which aligns with modern lifestyle modification strategies. Therapeutic principles such as *Langhana*, *Rukshana*, and *Lekhana* aim to correct metabolic imbalance and reduce excessive *Meda Dhatu*. Regular *Vyayama* and dietary regulation play a key role in sustaining results and preventing recurrence. Thus, the Ayurvedic approach offers a holistic and sustainable solution for managing *Atisthaulya* and related lifestyle disorders by addressing both root cause and clinical manifestations.¹³

CONCLUSION

Atisthaulya is a significant metabolic disorder described in Ayurveda, arising due to disturbed *Agni*, predominance of *Kapha Dosha*, and excessive accumulation of *Meda Dhatu*. The condition develops mainly due to improper diet and sedentary lifestyle, leading to *Srotorodha* and metabolic imbalance. Its close correlation with modern lifestyle disorders such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension highlights its clinical relevance in present times. Ayurveda provides a holistic approach for its management through *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Langhana*, *Lekhana*, and *Vyayama*, which not only help in reducing excess fat but also restore metabolic balance and prevent complications. Therefore, understanding and applying Ayurvedic principles in *Atisthaulya* can play an important role in the effective prevention and management of lifestyle disorders.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST –NIL

SOURCE OF SUPPORT –NONE

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