



Review Article

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UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF ASHTADOSHA IN THE COMPLICATIONS OF ATISTHAULYA

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ABSTRACT

Background *Atisthaulya* (obesity) is described in Ayurveda as a *Santarpanajanya Vyadhi* caused mainly by excessive nourishment leading to *Meda Vriddhi*. Acharya Charaka has clearly explained eight specific defects (*Ashtadosha*) associated with *Sthoulya*, which are responsible for various complications and poor prognosis. These defects provide a deep understanding of the pathological progression and clinical severity of obesity. **Aim** To understand the role of *Ashtadosha* in the development of complications associated with *Atisthaulya*. **Objectives** To describe the concept of *Atisthaulya* in Ayurveda To analyze the eight defects (*Ashtadosha*) of *Sthoulya* To correlate *Ashtadosha* with complications of obesity **Materials and Methods** This is a conceptual and literary study based on classical Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with relevant modern medical literature on obesity and its complications. The data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted to establish conceptual correlations. **Results** The *Ashtadosha* of *Atisthaulya* include *Ayushkshaya* (reduced lifespan), *Javoparodha* (decreased physical activity), *Krucchra Vyavayata* (difficulty in sexual activity), *Daurbalya* (weakness),

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Daurgandhya (foul body odor), *Swedadhikya* (excessive sweating), *Kshudha Atimatra* (excessive hunger), and *Pipasa Atimatra* (excessive thirst). These defects reflect metabolic imbalance, impaired *Agni*, *Meda Dhatu Dushti*, and *Srotorodha*, leading to complications such as cardiovascular disorders, diabetes mellitus, reduced mobility, and hormonal imbalance.

Conclusion *Ashtadosha* serves as an important clinical framework in understanding the complications of *Atisthaulya*. It highlights the systemic impact of obesity and emphasizes the need for early diagnosis and holistic management focusing on *Agni Deepana*, *Medohara Chikitsa*, and lifestyle modification.

Keywords *Atisthaulya*, *Ashtadosha*, *Meda Dhatu*, *Santarpana*, *Agni Dushti*, *Srotorodha*

INTRODUCTION

Atisthaulya is one of the major lifestyle disorders described in Ayurveda, which closely resembles the modern concept of obesity. It is categorized under *Santarpanajanya Vyadhi*, meaning a disease caused by over-nourishment and excessive intake of calorie-rich, heavy, and unctuous diet. Acharya *Charaka* has included *Sthoulya* among the eight undesirable body types (*Ashta Nindita Purusha*),¹ indicating its clinical importance and the need for early intervention. In today's era, sedentary lifestyle, faulty dietary habits, and lack of physical activity have significantly increased the prevalence of obesity, making it a major global health concern.

The pathogenesis of *Atisthaulya* mainly involves *Meda Dhatu Vriddhi* along with vitiation of *Kapha Dosha* and impairment of *Agni*. Due to *Atiagni*, improper digestion leads to accumulation of excess *Meda*, which results in abnormal deposition of fat in the body. This excessive *Meda* causes *Srotorodha* (obstruction of body channels), particularly affecting *Medovaha Srotas*. As a result, nourishment of other *Dhatu*s becomes compromised, leading to systemic imbalance and progression of disease. This condition is not just limited to physical heaviness but also affects functional capacity and overall health.²

Acharya *Charaka* has specifically described eight defects associated with *Sthoulya*, known as *Ashtadosha*, which explain the clinical severity and complications of this condition. These include *Ayushkshaya*, *Javoparodha*, *Krucchra Vyavayata*, *Daurbalya*, *Daurgandhya*, *Swedadhikya*, *Kshudha Atimatra*, and *Pipasa Atimatra*. These defects reflect the underlying metabolic disturbances and indicate how obesity affects multiple systems of the body. The

concept of *Ashtadosha* provides a deeper insight into the disease beyond mere fat accumulation, highlighting its impact on longevity, strength, metabolism, and quality of life.³

From a modern perspective, obesity is associated with several complications such as cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, dyslipidemia, and reduced physical efficiency. When correlated with Ayurveda, these complications can be well understood through the framework of *Ashtadosha*.⁴ Thus, understanding the role of *Ashtadosha* in *Atisthaulya* helps in better clinical assessment and guides effective management through *Ahara*, *Vihara*, and appropriate therapeutic interventions aimed at correcting *Agni*, reducing *Meda*, and restoring normal physiological balance.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

To understand the role of *Ashtadosha* in the development of complications associated with *Atisthaulya*.

Objectives

- To describe the concept of *Atisthaulya* in Ayurveda
- To analyze the eight defects (*Ashtadosha*) of *Sthoulya*
- To correlate *Ashtadosha* with complications of obesity

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study is a conceptual and literary review based on classical Ayurvedic texts and relevant modern literature. Detailed references were collected from *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* to understand the concept of *Atisthaulya* and *Ashtadosha*. Classical descriptions were critically analyzed to identify the pathological factors, clinical features, and their role in complications. In addition, modern medical literature related to obesity and its complications was reviewed to establish correlation with Ayurvedic principles. The collected data were systematically compiled, compared, and interpreted to understand the role of *Ashtadosha* in the pathogenesis and complications of *Atisthaulya*.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON ATISTHAULYA

Atisthaulya is described in Ayurveda as an excessive accumulation of *Meda Dhatu* leading to abnormal increase in body size and weight. Acharya *Charaka* defines *Sthoulya* as a condition

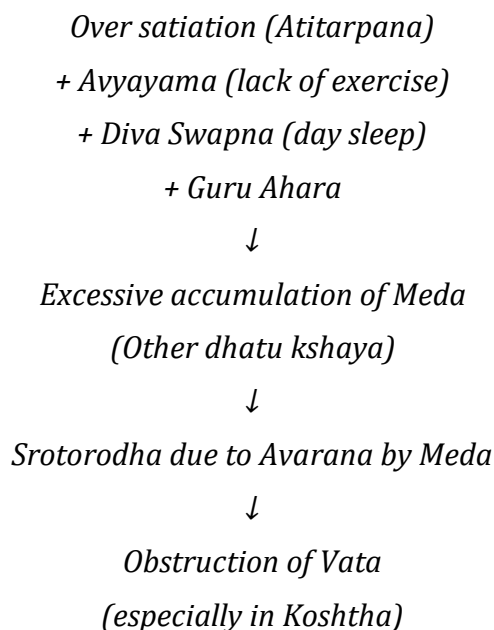
where there is disproportionate increase in *Meda* and *Mamsa*, particularly in regions like *Sphik*(hips), *Udara* (abdomen), and *Stana*(breasts). It is considered under *Ashta Nindita Purusha*, indicating that such a body constitution is prone to various complications and reduced longevity. The disease is not merely a structural abnormality but a metabolic disorder involving derangement of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Agni*.⁵

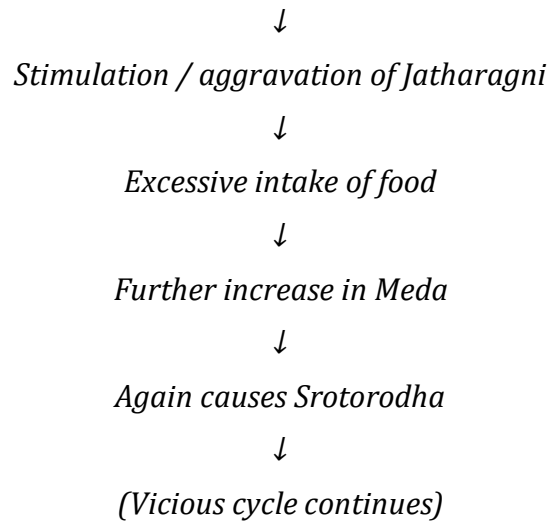
Nidana (Etiological Factors)

The causative factors of *Atisthaulya* mainly include excessive intake of *Guru*, *Snigdha*, *Madhura Ahara*, lack of physical activity, day sleep (*Divaswapna*), and sedentary lifestyle. Psychological factors like excessive comfort-seeking behavior and lack of discipline also contribute. These factors lead to aggravation of *Kapha Dosha* and vitiation of *Medovaha Srotas*, resulting in excessive formation and deposition of fat in the body.⁶

Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

The pathogenesis of *Atisthaulya* begins with *Atiagni*, which causes improper digestion and formation of excess nutritive material favoring *Meda Dhatu*. This leads to *Meda Vriddhi* and accumulation in various body parts. The increased *Meda* causes *Srotorodha*, particularly affecting the channels responsible for nutrient transport. Due to obstruction, *Vata Dosha* becomes aggravated and stimulates *Jatharagni*, leading to excessive hunger (*Kshudha Atimatra*). Thus, a vicious cycle is formed where increased intake further aggravates *Meda* accumulation, worsening the condition.⁷





Lakshana³¹ (Clinical Features)

The classical features of *Atisthaulya* include excessive fat deposition in *Sphik*, *Udara*, and *Stana*, along with symptoms like *Alasya* (lethargy), *Kshudha Atimatra* (increased appetite), *Pipasa Atimatra* (increased thirst), *Swedadhikya* (excessive sweating), and reduced physical activity. Patients often experience heaviness, decreased stamina, and difficulty in performing routine activities, reflecting systemic involvement of the disease.

Ashtadosha⁸ in Atisthaulya

Acharya *Charaka* has described eight specific defects (*Ashtadosha*) associated with *Atisthaulya*, which indicate its severity and complications. These include *Ayushkshaya* (reduced lifespan), *Javoparodha* (restricted movement), *Krucchra Vyavayata* (difficulty in sexual activity), *Daurbalya* (weakness), *Daurgandhya* (foul smell), *Swedadhikya* (excess sweating), *Kshudha Atimatra* (excess hunger), and *Pipasa Atimatra* (excess thirst). These features reflect metabolic imbalance, impaired tissue nourishment, and systemic dysfunction.

Upadrava⁹(Complications)

If untreated, *Atisthaulya* leads to multiple complications such as *Prameha*, *Hridroga*, *Sandhivata*, and reduced life expectancy. The excessive *Meda* interferes with normal physiology, leading to cardiovascular strain, metabolic disorders, and decreased immunity. These complications can be well understood through the concept of *Ashtadosha*, which represent the progressive deterioration of health.

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

The management of *Atisthaulya* focuses on reducing *Meda* and correcting *Agni*. Therapies include *Langhana*, *Rukshana*, *Lekhana*, and use of *Medohara Dravya*. Proper *Ahara* and *Vihara*, including light diet, regular exercise, and avoidance of causative factors, are essential. Panchakarma procedures like *Virechana* and *Lekhana Basti* are also beneficial in managing the condition effectively.

ASHTADOSHA OF ATISTHAULYA

1. *Ayushkshaya* (Reduced Lifespan)

In *Atisthaulya*, excessive accumulation of *Meda Dhatu* leads to impaired functioning of vital organs and disturbance in metabolic processes. Due to *Srotorodha* and continuous burden on body systems, especially cardiovascular and respiratory systems, the overall vitality declines. This results in shortening of lifespan, as the body becomes more susceptible to chronic diseases like *Prameha* and *Hridroga*.

2. *Javoparodha* (Restriction of Physical Activity)

The increased body mass and excessive fat deposition cause heaviness and stiffness in the body, leading to reduced mobility. The individual finds difficulty in performing routine physical activities due to lack of energy and flexibility. This limitation further aggravates *Kapha* and *Meda Vriddhi*, creating a cycle of inactivity and worsening obesity.

3. *Krucchra Vyavayata* (Difficulty in Sexual Activity)

Due to excessive fat accumulation and reduced physical stamina, there is difficulty in performing sexual activity. The vitiation of *Kapha* and obstruction of channels impair reproductive function. Additionally, hormonal imbalance and decreased vitality contribute to reduced sexual performance and satisfaction.

4. *Daurbalya* (General Weakness)

Although there is an increase in body weight, the strength of the individual is reduced due to improper nourishment of other *Dhatus*. The excessive *Meda* hampers proper distribution of nutrients, leading to weakness and fatigue. This paradoxical condition reflects that increased body mass does not equate to increased strength.

5. *Daurgandhya* (Foul Body Odor)

Excessive sweating and accumulation of metabolic waste products in the body lead to unpleasant body odor. The vitiation of *Kapha* and *Meda*, along with improper elimination of waste, contributes to this condition. Poor hygiene and reduced metabolism further aggravate the foul smell.

6. *Swedadhikya* (Excessive Sweating)

Individuals with *Atisthaulya* experience excessive sweating due to increased body mass and metabolic imbalance. The aggravated *Kapha* and *Meda* produce more heat and moisture, leading to continuous perspiration. This not only causes discomfort but also predisposes to skin infections and irritation.

7. *Kshudha Atimatra* (Excessive Hunger)

Due to obstruction of *Srotas* and aggravated *Vata*, *Jatharagni* becomes irregular and often increases, leading to excessive hunger. The person feels frequent desire to eat, which further increases calorie intake and worsens *Meda Vridhhi*. This creates a vicious cycle of overeating and obesity.

8. *Pipasa Atimatra* (Excessive Thirst)

In *Atisthaulya*, metabolic imbalance and increased internal heat led to excessive thirst. The body demands more fluid to compensate for altered metabolism and excessive sweating. This symptom reflects disturbance in fluid balance and impaired physiological regulation.

DISCUSSION

The present conceptual study highlights that *Atisthaulya* is not merely an increase in body weight but a complex metabolic disorder involving *Meda Dhatu Vridhhi*, *Kapha Prakopa*, and *Atiagni*. The pathological process begins with improper dietary habits and sedentary lifestyle, leading to accumulation of excessive *Meda* and obstruction of *Srotas*. This obstruction disturbs normal *Vata* movement, which in turn stimulates *Jatharagni*, causing increased hunger and further aggravation of the disease.¹¹ Thus, a self-perpetuating cycle is formed where excessive intake and impaired metabolism continuously worsen the condition.

The concept of *Ashtadosha* provides a detailed clinical understanding of how *Atisthaulya* affects multiple systems of the body. Each defect reflects a specific pathological outcome, such as *Ayushkshaya* indicating reduced longevity, *Javoparodha* showing restricted mobility,

and *Daurbalya* representing poor functional strength despite increased body mass. Similarly, *Swedadhikya* and *Daurgandhya* highlight altered thermoregulation and accumulation of metabolic waste, while *Kshudha Atimatra* and *Pipasa Atimatra* demonstrate disturbances in appetite and fluid balance. These features collectively indicate that *Atisthaulya* leads to both structural and functional derangements.

When correlated with modern science, the manifestations of *Ashtadosha* closely resemble the complications of obesity such as metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disorders, insulin resistance, and reduced physical efficiency. The Ayurvedic explanation through *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Srotas* offers a holistic perspective that integrates both physiological and pathological aspects of the disease. Therefore, understanding *Ashtadosha* not only helps in early identification of complications but also guides effective management strategies focusing on correction of *Agni*, reduction of *Meda*, and restoration of systemic balance through appropriate *Ahara*, *Vihara*, and therapeutic interventions.¹²

CONCLUSION

Atisthaulya is a multifactorial metabolic disorder characterized by excessive *Meda Dhatu Vriddhi*, *Kapha Prakopa*, and *Atiagni*, leading to systemic imbalance and various complications. The concept of *Ashtadosha* provides a comprehensive clinical framework to understand the severity and progression of this condition, as each defect reflects specific functional and metabolic disturbances in the body. These defects not only explain the classical features of *Atisthaulya* but also show strong correlation with modern complications such as reduced mobility, metabolic disorders, and decreased life expectancy. Therefore, early identification and management of *Atisthaulya* based on the principles of correcting *Agni*, reducing *Meda*, and adopting proper *Ahara* and *Vihara* are essential to prevent complications and improve overall health.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST –NIL

SOURCE OF SUPPORT – NONE

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