

AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO *STHAULYA* - HISTORICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda “The Science Of Life” firmly believes in “*SwasthasyaSwasthyaRakshanam Aturasya VikarPrashamanam.*” *Acharya*’s has mentioned *Sthaulya* (obesity) one among the *Santarpan Janya Vyadhis* like *Prameha*, *Pandu*, etc. Which possess a serious threat to the mankind, regarding its treatment since it is a multi factorial metabolic disorder a precise treatment is not available in modern science. In *Ayurveda* also, it has been advocated by *Acharya*’s as *Krichrasadhya* in most of cases and holistic approach is explained.

Keywords: *Ayurveda, Sthaulya, Santarpan Janya Vyadhis*

INTRODUCTION

Vyutpatti: The word *Sthaulya* derives its name from root “*Stu*” with suffix “*Ach*”. The literal meaning of the term is bulky, solid or weighing substance¹.

Nirukti: *Sthaulya* refers to the existence of *Sthaulyatva*, i.e., bulkiness, as described in *Shabdakalpadruma*². *Durgadas* described *Sthoola* person as one with increase *Bruhanatva*. *Sthoola*, literally means something large, great, bulky, huge, fat, corpulent etc³.

Paribhasha: A person having pendulous appearance of *Sphika*, *Udara* and *Stana* due to excess deposition of *Meda* along with *Mansa Dhatu* and also having unequal and abnormal distribution of *Meda* with reduced enthusiasm is called *Atisthoola*⁴.

Paryaya:

*Pinam, Pivara, Pivaram, Sthoola, Pina, Piva, Pivam, Pivasa, Pivistha, Medana, Medini, Medasvina*⁵.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES:

- To review the literature on *Sthaulya* from *Vedas*

- To review the literature on *Sthaulya* from *Ayurvedic* classics

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This review was done by compiling *Vedas* and the classical *Ayurvedic* literature such as *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, *Vagbhata Samhitas* etc.

Sthaulya in Vedic Kala: (10000 to 1000 B.C.):

Veda are known as dawn of the sciences and considered as the oldest authentic manuscripts ever found. Some scattered references are available in *Vedas*, *Yajur Veda* has mentioned term *Upachita*⁶, *Atharva Veda* has coined terms *Medini*⁷, *Pivasi*⁸ and *Medas*⁹ for *Sthaulya*.

Samhita Kala (2000 BC – 400 A.D.):

Charaka Samhita (200 B.C.)

Charaka Samhita, the ultimate doctrine in *Ayurveda* has included “*Atisthauilya Purusha*” as one amongst the *Ashtanindit Purusha*. It is also mentioned as one among disorders of *Shleshma Nanatamaja Vyadhi*, *Santarpana Nimitaja Vyadhi* and *Atibrihamimitaja Vyadhi*.

Reference for *Sthaulya* can be found in *Sanshodhana Yogya, Taila Seven Yogya* and *Swedana Ayogya*.

Sushruta Samhita (2 A.D.)

Sushruta Samhita, the main treatise of *Dhanvantri Sampradaya* has considered *Sthaulya* one among *Rasa Nimittaja* disorders and narrated the pathogenesis of *Sthaulya Roga* on the basis of “*Dhatvagni Mandya*”. *Sthaulya* is considered as condition of body that results from vitiated *Meda*. A new synonym *Jatharya* has been used. *Sushruta* has contraindicated *Vaman* and *Virechan* in *Sthaulya*.

Ashtanga Sangraha (6 A.D.) and Hridaya (7 A.D.)

“*Vridha Vagbhata* and *Vagbhata*” has elaborated the pathogenesis of *Sthaulya* on the basis of formation of *Ama* and altered *Dhatu Parinama*. Types of *Sthaulya* and their management have been first time mentioned by *Vridha Vagbhata*. Use of *Langhana* therapy is indicated for *Brihaniya* disorders like *Sthaulya*. They have considered *Rasanjana* as a drug of choice for *Sthaulya* and concluded that *Kasrya* is better than *Sthaulya*.

Kashyapa Samhita (6 A.D.) *Kashyapa* has given some new aspects of management, while narrating *Medasvi Dhatri Chikitsa*, suggested *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting) as one of the best treatment for *Medasvi Dhatri*. *Sthula* and *Atisthula* words are frequently used at different places especially in description of anthropology in *Sutrasthana*, *Atisthula* is classified one among ten *Aprashast Sharira*.

Madhava Nidana (7th A.D.)

Madhava has elaborated the pathophysiology of this disease on the basis of increased *Meda* and *Meda* deposit site. He has elaborated *Sthaulya* by adding new symptoms like *Moha* etc.

Bhela Samhita (7th A.D.)

In *Bhela Samhita* *Sthaulya* is described as a disorder of vitiated *Meda* in chapter *Samashana Paridhaniya*.

Sangraha Kala & Commentators:

Chakrapani (11th Century)

In context of *Sthaulya* treatment, he has commented that *Guru* and *Aptarpana* property helps to alleviate *Kshudha* and reduce *Meda* respectively.

Dalhana (12th century)

Regarding line of treatment, *Acharya* has interpreted *Virukshana* as *Medoghna* and *Chhedaniya* as *Strota Vishodana*.

Arunadutta (13th century)

The word “*Sthawima*” has been used for the *Sthaulya*, explained on the basis of etymology in *Sarvanga Sundari* commentary on *Astanga Hridya*.

Sharangdhar Samhita (13th century)

Sharangdhar has described *Sthaulya* as *Medadosha* and mentioned it as a characteristic of *Shleshma Prakriti*.

Bhav Prakash (16th century)

Bhavmishra was the first person to name the chapter as *Sthaulya Adhikar*. He mentioned a few preparations such as *Amritadiguggulu* and *Lepaudvartana*.

Yoga Ratnakar (17th Century)

This book too adopted the name of *Medoroga* to explain *Sthaulya*. Many new *Yogas* have been added such as *Navak Guggulu*, *Lepaudvartana* are also mentioned along with *Rasayogas*.

NIDANA – PANCHAKA

Nidana of Sthaulya:

The components of *Meda* and *Shleshma* vitiation are said to be responsible for *Sthaulya*. *Nidana* of *Sthaulya* can be categorized as follows-

- *Beejadoshaja*
- *Aharaja nidana*
- *Viharaja nidana*

Beejaswabhavaja:

Acharya Charaka has specifically mentioned *Beejadosh* as the *Nidana* for *Sthaulya* and *Chakrapani* comments over it as “*Beejaswabhavadi Ati Sthula Mata Pitru Janyatvat*”¹⁰.

Aharaja Nidana:

Role of *Ahara Rasa* is very important in deciding the *pramana* of *MedaDhatu* in the body. *Sushruta* has highlighted this fact that the quantity and quality of *Ahara Rasa* in the *Shareera* is responsible for *Sthoolta* or *Karshya*¹¹. The qualities of *AharaRasa* increasing *Kapha* and *Meda* will lead to *Sthaulya*, viz. *Rasa – Madhura, Guna – Guru, Sheeta, Manda, Snigdha, Shlakshna* and *Picchila, Virya – Sheeta, Vipaka – Madhura, Mahabhuta – Prithvi* and *Aapa*.

Guru and Snigdha Ahara:

Madhura Rasa Sevana: Most of Acharyas like *Charaka, Sushruta, Vagbhata, Yogratnakara, Bhavmishra, Madhavakara* have considered *Madhura Rasa* as an etiological factor for *Sthaulya*¹².

Mamsa Sevana: *Kashyapa* has mentioned *Mamsa* as the best diet for growth of muscles and body fat¹³. *Charaka* has given special reference of *Anoopa DeshajaMamsa* like *Sramara* (forest pig), *Mahisha, Gavaya, Gaja*, etc¹⁴.

Madya Sevana: *Charaka* has mentioned usage of *Nav Madya* as causative factor of *Sthaulya*¹⁵.

Gorasa, Dadhi Sevana: Excessive usage of *Gorasa* and *Dadhi* increases *Kapha* and *MedaDhatu*, thus leads to *Sthaulya*.

Ahara Krama: Acharyas have mentioned factors like *Adhyashana* and *Atisampoornad* as *Nidana* of *Sthaulya*.

Bhojanottar Jalapana: has been considered as the causative factor for *Sthaulya* formation by *Vridhdha Vagbhata, Vagbhata*^{16 & 17} and *Kashyapa*¹⁸.

Viharaja Nidana: Activities like *Avyayama, Avyavaya, Diwaswapana* and *Atinidra* are responsible for *Sthaulya*.

Manasika Nidana: *Achintana, Harshanitya, Manasonivritti* have been considered as the *Manasika Nidanas* of *Sthaulya* in *Ayurveda*¹⁹.

Purvarupa of Sthaulya:

None of the *Ayurvedic* texts has described the *Purvarupas* of *Sthaulya*. *Acharya Charaka*, in *Nidana Sthana*, has mentioned similar pathogenesis of *Prameha* and *Sthaulya*²⁰, the reason being that in both there is vitiation of *Kapha* and *Meda*. Therefore *Purvarupa* of *Prameha* and *MedovahaStrotodushti Lakshanas* can be considered as *Purvarupa* of *Sthaulya* and are as follows: *Atinidra, Tandra, Alasya, Visra Sharira Gandha, Anga Gaurava, Anga Saithilya* etc.

Rupa of Sthaulya:

Acharya Charaka has enlisted *Medo Mamsa Ativridhdhi, Chala Sphika, Chala Udara, Chala Stana, Ayatha Upachaya* and *Anutsaha* as cardinal features of *Sthaulya*. Besides these cardinal symptoms, *Acharya Charaka* in *Sutrasthana* has also mentioned *AshtaDoshas*²¹ (Eight Disabilities) of *AtisthoolaPurusha*, which are as follows: ***Ayushohrasa-*** (Reduced life expectancy), ***Javoparodha*** (Laziness), ***KricchaVyavaya*** (Difficulty in performing sexual act) ***Daurbalya*** (Weakness), ***Daurgandhya*** (Foul body odour), ***Kshudhatimatra*** and ***Pipasatiyoga*** (Appetite and Thirst).

Diagnostic Methods of Sthaulya:

Sushruta wsr to *ShataKriyaKala* has said that early diagnosis provides a chance to treat a disease easily and also stops its further progress. Diagnostic methods described in *Ayurvedic* texts are subjective as well as objective type. *Subjective*

parameters are *Laxanas (Rupas)* mentioned earlier.

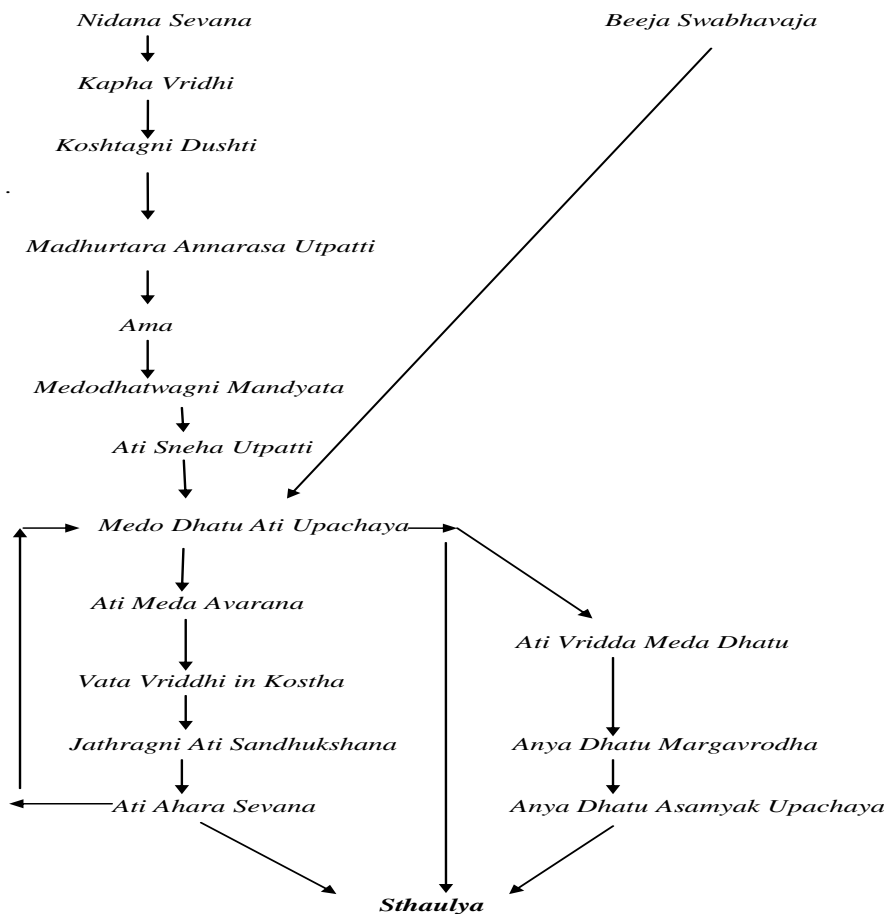
Objective parameters- *Sthaulya* (Obesity) is diagnosed by inspection²². Both *Acharya Charaka* and *Acharya Sushruta* have described measurement for different body parts in *Angula Pramana-Pramana Pariksha*.

Samprapti of Sthaulya:

According to *Charaka*, due to *Avarana* (Obstruction) of all the *Srotas* (Channels) by the *Meda*, there is *Vridhhi*

of *KosthagataVata (Samana Vayu)* which in turn causes *Ati Sandhukshana* of *Jathragni*. The increase in *Jathragni* leads to rapid digestion of consumed food and leaves the person craving for more food. If at all due to some reason the person does not receive more food the increased *Agni* causes *DhatuPachana* which may lead to various complications. But consuming the food more frequently results in *Meda Vridhhi* which ultimately leads to *Sthaulya*²³.

Flows chart No 01: Schematic representation of Samprapti of Sthaulya.



According to *Sushruta*, *Kaphavardhakahara*, *Adhyasana*, *Avyayama*, *Divaswapna* etc. leads to formation of *Ama Rasa (Apachit Adhya Rasa Dhatu)*.

The *Madhura Bhava Ama Rasa* moves within the body, the *Snigdhansha* of this *Ama Rasa* causes *Srotosanga* and excessive stoutness which leads to *Sthaulya*²⁴.

Samprapti Ghatakas: -

Dosha : *Kapha (Kledaka), Vata (Samana, Vyana) Pitta (Pachaka)*
Dushya : *Meda- Mamsa and Rasa Dhatu.*
Agni : *Jathragni, Meda and Rasa Dhatvagni*
Srotas : *MedaVaha, Mamsa Vaha, Rasa Vaha, Sweda Vaha, UdakaVaha*
Sroto Dushti : *Sanga i.e. Margavorodha*
Adhistan : *Particularly Vapavahana and Meda Dhatu Kala.*
Udabhava Sthana : *Amashya*
Sanchara Sthana : *Rasayani*
Roga Marga : *Bahya*
Vyaktasthana : *Sarvanga, Specifically Sphika, Udara and Stana.*

Classification of Sthaulya: Ayurvedic classics like *AshtangaSamgrha*, *Ashtanga Hridaya* and *SharangadharSamhita* have thrown light on the classification of the disease *Sthaulya*. While narrating the indications for *LanghanaUpkrama*, *Astanga Samgraha*²⁵ and *Astanga Hridaya*²⁶ have classified as *Sthaulya* as *Hina Sthaulya*, *Madhyama Sthaulya* and *Adhika Sthaulya*.

AcharyaSharangadara, on the basis of vitiation of *Meda* and *Vata*, has mentioned only one type of *Sthaulya*²⁷ i.e. *Medo Dosha*. All other *Acharyas* have mentioned only one type of *Sthaulya*.

Upadravas of Sthaulya:

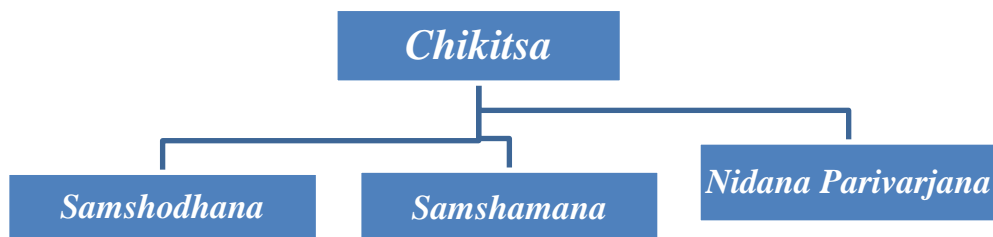
Describing the severity of *Sthaulya*, *Charaka* has compared the aggravated *Vata* and *Pitta* with *Davanala*, which destroys the whole forest. Classical texts have explained *Ama Roga*, *Apachi*, *Arsa*, *Atisara*, *Jwara*, *Kamala*, *Kasa*, *Kustha*, *Mutra Kricchra*, *Prameha*, *Pramehapidika*, *Shleepada*, *Sanyasa*, *Udara Roga*, *Urusthambha*, *Vata Vikara*, *Visarpa*, *Vidradhi* as complications of *Sthaulya*.

Chikitsa of Sthaulya:

According to *Acharya Charaka*, all the actions that leads to the restoration of the equilibrium among doshas (vitiating doshas), constitute the *Chikitsa* of a disease.

General principle adopted in the management of any disorder is the *SamshodhanadiTrividha Chikitsa* mentioned by *Charaka* in *Vimanasthana*²⁸.

Figure No.02: Showing Trividha Chikitsa



Samshodhanatherapy is further two types i.e. *Bahir Parimarjana* (External Purification) and *Abhyantara Samshodhana* (Internal Purification).

Bahir Parimarjana Samshodhana: There is description of external purification therapy in the management of *Sthaulya*.

AcharyaCharaka has mentioned *RukshaUdavartana* for *Sthaulya*²⁹. *Vaghbhatta* has mentioned the benefits of *RukshaUdavartana* like *Kaphahara*, *Medasa* *Parivilayana*, *SthiriKarnamAngam* etc³⁰.

Abhyantar Samshodhana:

Vagbhatta has advocated the use of *Samshodhana* therapy including *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Niruha*, and *Raktamokshana* etc. in *Atisthula* persons with *Bahudosha* and *AdhikaBala*³¹.

Charaka has considered *Sthaulya* as a *SamtarpanajanyaVyadhi* and has recommended the use of *Vamana*, *Virechana*, and *Raktamokshana* in all *SamtarpanajanyaVyadhis* including *Sthaulya*³². Besides this he has also mentioned *Ruksha*, *Tikshna*, *Ushna Basti* for the management of *Sthaulya*.

Vamana and *Virechana* cause *Laghuta* in the body and irradiate the *MedaDourgandhya*^{33, 34 & 35}. A number of *BastiKalpas* are mentioned in *Ayurvedic* texts but *Lekhana Basti* is considered as the best therapy for *Sthaulya/Medovridhi*³⁶. *Sharangdhara* has given a clear description regarding the *Lekhana Dravyas*³⁷.

Sushruta has recommended the use of *TriphaladiTailaNasya* in the patients of *Medovridhi*³⁸. *Kashyapa* has advocated *KarshanaNasya* as a treatment for all *Kaphaja* disorders including *Sthaulya*³⁹. *Maharshi Kashyapa* and *Bhavamishra* have recommended *RaktaMokshana* for the treatment of *Sthaulya*^{40&41}.

Samshamana Therapy:

Charaka has advocated the principle of *SthaulyaChikitsa* with following words: *Guru Cha Aptarpana*, i.e. Administration of *Guru* and *ApatarpakaDravyas*, which possess the additional properties of *Vataghna*, *Kaphahara* and *Medonashaka*, are considered as an ideal for *Samshamana* therapy. Similar views have been expressed by *Chakrapani*, according to whom, *Guru Guna* has the property of alleviating the vitiated *Agni* and *Aptarpana* provides less nourishment and

hence reduces *Meda*. The best example of such a *Dravya* is *Madhu* (honey). It has the properties of *Gurutva* and *Rukshatva* and hence is ideal for the management of *Sthaulya*. *Gangadhara* has interpreted that *Guru* property is suitable to alleviate *Tikshnagni* and vitiated *Vata* especially *KosthagataVata*, which ultimately reduces *Atikshuda* and *Apatarpana* property, causes reduction of *Meda*⁴².

But while following the principle of *Guru Cha Apatarpanam*, one should always remember that both *Guru* and *Apatarpaka* properties must be present simultaneously as the consumption of only *Guru Dravyas* like *Ghrita*, *Taila*, *Vasa* etc. by *SthulaPurusha* will further increase the *Meda* and thus deteriorating the condition. Similarly if only *Apatarpana* therapy (*Upavasa*, *Langhana* etc.) is used then it will increase the already increased *KosthagataAgni* and *Vayu* which may have serious consequences and may even cause death.

While describing the *Chikitsa* of *Sthaulya*, *Charaka* has also narrated that *Sthulamevatipidyeta* meaning that it is very difficult to treat *Atisthula* people as if *Karshana* therapy is applied then it leads to further aggravation of already aggravated *Jathragni* and *Vayu* and if *Brimhana* therapy is applied it further increase the *Meda*⁴³. *Charaka* has mentioned many *Dravyas* such as: *Guduchi*, *Nagaramooha*, *Triphala*, *TakraArishtha*, *Vayavidanga*, *Shunthi*, various *Kshars*, *Bilvadi Panchamoola*, *Agnimantha Rasa* with *Shilajeet* etc for the management of *Sthaulya*⁴⁴.

A number of *Yogas* have been described in various *Ayurvedic* texts for the management of *Sthaulya*.

Nidana Parivarjana:

Nidana Parivarjana means avoiding all the *Aharatmaka*, *Viharatmaka* and *ManasikaNidana* responsible for the manifestation of a disease, such as *AtiMadhura*, *Guru*, *Snigdha Ahara Sevana*, *Divaswapna*, *Ati Harsha* etc. should be avoided in case of *Sthaulya*. Both *Charaka* and *Sushruta* have given great emphasis on the principle of *Nidana Parivarjana*. *Sushruta* highlighted importance of *NidanaParivarjana* with the *Sutra*, *Sankshepa Kriyayoga Nidana Parivarjanam*.

Pathya – Apathya of Sthaulya:

Ayurvedic classics laid more importance upon *Pathyapathya* in the management of a disease. *Shuka Dhanya* (Cereals Grain) *Puran Shali*, *Kodrava*, *Shyyamak*, *Yava*, *Priyangu*, *Laja*, etc. are useful whereas *Godhum*, *Naveen Dhanya (Shali)* to be avoided. Among *ShamiDhanya* (Pulses) *Mudga*, *Rajamasha*, *Kulattha*, *Chanaka*, *Masur*, *Adhaki* are useful and *Masha*, *Tila* to be avoided. *Shaka Varga* such as *Patola*, *Patrashaka*, *Shigru*, *Katutikta*, *Rasatmak-Vastuka*, *Trapusha Vartaka*, *Ardraka*, *Mulaka* are considered as *Pathya*. *Drava Varga* such as *Madhu*, *Takra*, *Ushna Jala*, *Tila Taila*, *Sarshapa Taila*, *Asava*, *Arista*, *Surasava*, *Jeerna Madya* are indicated whereas *Dugdha* and *Ikshu Vikaram* are contraindicated. *Ushnodaka Sevana*, *Ratri Jagarana*, *Bhraman*, *Ruksha Udvardana*, *Upavasa*, *Aswapanam* are *Viharaj Pathya* and *Sheetal Jala Sevan*, *Diwaswapna*, *Avyavaya*, *Avyayam*, *AtiAshana*, *Sukha Shaiyya* are *Apathya*. *Shoka*, *Chinta*, *Bhaya*, *Krodha* are *Mansika Pathya* and *Nitya Harsha*, *Achintana*, *MansoNivritti* are among *MansikaApathya* for *Sthaulaya*.

DISCUSSION

In the present paper, attempt has been made to compile the detailed description

about the disease *Sthaulya* as per *Ayurvedic* and *Vedic* literature. The classical texts of *Ayurveda* have described *Sthaulya* in detail. The description of *Sthaulya* is found in almost every authentic *Ayurvedic* texts.

Apart from the dietetic and habitual factors the other factor that *Acharya Charaka* has described to be responsible for *Sthaulya* is the *Beejaswabhavaja* and even *Chakrapani* comments on it as “*Ati Sthoola Matru Pitru Shonitha Shukra Sambhavat*”. Modern science also accepts lifestyle (*Aharaj* and *Viharaj Nidana*) and genetic (*Beejaswabhavaja*) causes for obesity i.e, similar to *Ayurveda*.

Kapha and *Meda Dhatu* plays a vital role in the pathogenesis of the *Sthaulya* disease and are the main *Dosha- Dushya Ghatakas* involved in *Sthaulya*. Due to *Avarana* (obstruction) of the *Strotas* by the *Meda Dhatu*, there is *Vridhhi* of *Koshthagata Vata (Samana Vata)* which ultimately leads to the *Atisandukshana* of the *Jathragni*. The increased *Jathragni* leads to the rapid digestion of the food which makes the person craving for food. The increased food intake causes *Meda Atiupachaya* resulting is *Sthaulya*.

CONCLUSIONS

Sthaulya is a *Santarpanjanya Vyadhi* and *Acharya Charaka* recommends *Chikitsa* “*Guru Cha Aptarpana*”. Along with *Kapha* and *Meda, Vata* and *Agni* also play a vital role and can be considered as the *Upadravakaras* in a *Sthaulya Rogi*. So the *Chikitsa* must be focused on alleviating the *Vata* and *Kapha Dosha*, besides taking care of the increased *Meda Dhatu* and impaired *Agni*.

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