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PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY IN AYURVEDA

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Abstract: Overweight and obesity amongst all age groups has proved to be emerged as a serious public health problem in whole world. To beat this life hampering, social stigmatic and health burden crisis condition. We all need to implement principles of ayurveda in our daily life. Psychological approach to overweight and obesity in Ayurveda is beautifully explained in various chapters and topics as Satwavajaya Chikitsa, Sthoulya chikitsa, Rasayana Chikitsa, these natural healing method are not only to cure disease like as said above but also helps to rejuvenate our body and mind and maintain proper body weight and shape by increasing immunity which is useful in overcome stress and promoting a good and strong mental attitude towards healthy life styles.

Keywords: Obesity, Satwavajaya Chikitsa, Sthoulya Chikitsa, Rasayana Chikitsa

Introduction: The medical sciences are trying hard to achieve healthy and long life in human beings with an objective of “longer life with lesser disease and painless death”. Aim of our Indian philosophy regarding life is also the same. Man will be always being happy when he maintains harmonious relationship with the Mother Nature. But when once he develops the habit of excessive eating, gradually the lazy nature enters and this results as heaviness of the body. Then he started to think of living in comfort zone. To maintain that comfortable life the greedy nature entered, which resulted into the development of dangerous qualities like unrighteousness, anger, jealous, pride, hatredness, sorrow etc. At this juncture the stress appeared in human life which is the major cause in producing mental as well as physical illnesses. Due to the stress and its related disorders the quality of life deteriorated and the life expectancy is reduced greatly. Among the stress related disorders the overweight and obesity becomes a burning issue all over the world. Obesity is direct cause for death of 3,00,000 individuals each year. According to WHO obesity has increased world wide even in the same nations that suffer from malnutrition. Many

causes are there for obesity like genetic causes, environmental causes, hormonal causes and psychological causes etc. In the present stressful, busy and polluted era the psychological disturbances play a major role in producing the obesity and overweight.

Psychosomatic Approach: To understand the pathology of the disease and to treat the disease successfully the psychosomatic approach is essential.

सत्त्वमात्मा शरीरं च त्रयमेतन्निदण्डवत्।

लोकचित्तच्छति संयोगात्त्र सर्वे प्रतिष्ठितम्॥ च० सू० १/४६

Because human being stands on tripod of *Satwa*, *Atma* and *Sarira*^[1], that means constant interaction of body, mind and soul will constitute *Purusha* (Human being). The disease may origin in mind or in body and can influence the other one. So the pathology could be grasped only by considering the person as a whole and not by analyzing it in parts. The same psychosomatic approach is required to understand the overweight and obesity produced by the psychological factors explained in Ayurveda.

Etiology of Overweight and Obesity in Psychological View: Psychological causes of overweight & obesity can be classified in to three groups.

1. Emotional factors
2. Inadequate personalities
3. Influence of food & Psychological constitution.

I. Emotional Factors

Achinta

तदतिस्थौल्यमतिस्पृग्णादगुरुमधुरशीतास्निग्धोपयोगादव्यायामादव्यवायाद्दिवास्वप्नाद्धर्ष

नित्यत्वादचित्तनाद्वीजस्वभावाच्चोपजायते। च० सू० २१/४

In *medo roga* and *Sthoulya*, *Achinta*² is considered as one of the psychological cause. *Chinta* is normal function of mind which is required for a normal healthy human being. The *Achinta* is due to diminution of thought process. This *Achinta* can influence the lifestyle and may result in sedentary nature of mind and body. This sedentary life will aggravate the *Tamasika guna*. If the *achintha* is continued, it will result in *Vishada* i.e. depression, which is one of the major psychological cause for obesity^[2]. Sedentary lifestyle itself can increase the body weight because of not using the mind and body^[3]. *Pushti* is going to produce *swapna* and *Atiswapna* is best in producing the *tandra*, as a result both *kapha* and *tamasika guna* will aggravate and increases further body weight & depression.

Harshanityatvat: Happy and joyous mood will never cause the disease, but if it is continuous, it can be considered as pathological state of mind. *Harsha* is classified into three types. According to *Bhagavadgita*^[4], *Satvika harsha*, which is *shuba prada* and gives *atma shudhi*, *Rajasika harsha* gives *dukha*, *nidra* & *alasya* will develop as a result of *Tamasika harsha*. Always *Satvika harsha* is good, but if the *Rajasika* and *Tamasika harsha* continued, it will result in diseased state. Because of *harsha nityatva*, *Kapha* will *Tamasika guna* produces *sarira gourava* and results in overweight and obesity^[3] so certainly *Harshanityatvat* condition is going to increase body weight.

II. Inadequate Personality: The inadequate personality (*heena satva*^[5]) fails to adjust in society and cannot face the difficult situations. They suffer from various psychiatric illnesses. *Acharya Charaka*^[6] has mentioned that such people suffer from Psychiatric illness such as *Vishada*, *Moorcha*, *Unmada*, *Brahma* etc. So inadequacy in mental strength plays an important role in producing various diseases. The mental strength depends on some factors like *Manasika Prakriti* (Psychological constitutions), *Achara vyavahara* (conduct and behavior), *Mata Pitru*

Satva (parent's constitution), *Ahara* (Food) and *Poorvakrita karma* (previous life deeds).

In *Ayurveda* 16 Psychological constitutions^[7,8] are mentioned as 7 *Satvika kayas*, 6 *Rajasika kayas* and 3 *Tamasika kayas*. These *kayas* can be considered as personality traits. *Satvika guna* is considered as pure state of the mind and it will never cause any disease. The *Rajas* and *Tamas* are considered as *doshas* because of its "Roshha (*krodha*) *guna* and *Moha guna*" respectively. The *Rajasika Prakriti* people will have features like feeling of much pain, non-compression, vanity, untruthfulness, non clemency, pride and over winning confidence in one's own excellence, lust, anger etc and *Tamasika Prakriti* people will have despondency, stupidity, disbelief of intellect, lethargy in action and sleepiness. The *Rajasika guna* produces the stress in life and *Tamasika guna* produces the sedentary life styles which are the causes for overweight and obesity. These two personalities can also consider as inadequate personalities where they are prone to psychiatric as well as psychosomatic illnesses.

III. Food & Psychological constitution: The food can influence the mind directly. In *Chandogyopanishad*, *trividha ahara pakas* are mentioned in which the maximum portion of the digested food is going to be converted into *mala* (waste products), the moderate portion will nourish the *rasadi dhathus*^[9] i.e. tissues & the minute (*sukshmamsha*) portion is going to nourish the *manas*. Depending upon the quality of the food the mind is going to be influenced accordingly. Based on the *Manasika Prakriti* the people will have the desire on different types of foods. In *Bhagavatgeeta*, the *ahara* is divided in to 3 types i.e. *Satvika ahara*, *Rajasika ahara* & *Tamasika ahara*^[10]. The *satvika ahara* increases the *Ayu* (lifespan), *Satwa bala* (strong mind) *Arogya* (health) & *Sukha* (comfortness). This *ahara* increases the *Satwa guna* & is liked by *Satvika* people. The *rajasika Ahara* results in *Dukha* (misery) *Shoka* (grief) & *Amaya* (disease). This type of food will be selected by *Rajasika* people & it will result in disease & stress. The *Tamasika Ahara* will cause *Amedhya*. This type food usually *Tamasika* people will indulge & it will reduce the *Medha* (Intellect) & it leads to *Moha* & *Prajnaparadha*.

At the same time the *Rajasika kayas* like *Rakshasa*, *Paishacha*, *Sarpa*, *Preta* & *Sjuhakuna kayas* are having the habit of excessive eating, fondness for non-vegetarian food, abnormal diet, excessive sleep, excessive

desire for food & the Tamasika kayas like Pashava, Vanaspathya are having the habits like hateful food intake, excessive sleep, excessive indulgence of food etc. If a person will have abnormal food habits & sleeping pattern along with the stress & sedentary lifestyle then it may lead to Overweight & Obesity^[11].

Cause and Effect Relation of Eating Habits & Psychological Factors in Obesity:

Psychological and social effects play a role both as cause and effect of overweight & obesity. Often the cause & effect relationship creates a never ending cycle of psychological distress. How food effects mood is both biological & environmental. Especially psychological factors influence eating habits. High fat foods & diets high in noncomplex carbohydrates inhibit the release of stress- fighting hormones; supporting the theory that chronic stress can lead to a constant urge to eat such foods. Food cravings are the body's attempt to alter the brain chemistry in order to self regulates the hormonal imbalance created by stress. When stress is persistent stress hormones maintain the stress response at a heightened level of alert resulting in the formation of surplus fat cells, blood pressure elevation & salt retention. Individuals who habitually use food to deal with emotions lose the ability to regulate how they feel & the ability to maintain healthy ways of resolving problems and coping with the life stresses. Among the psychosocial aspects of obesity especially in women sexual, physical and emotional abuse can result in long term adverse consequences that include obesity. These women may be severely obese suffer from chronic depression and experience a number of psychosomatic symptoms.

Treatment: In overweight and obesity caused by the psychological factors appropriate psychiatric help is needed along with identification of the cause is important before the initiation of weight reduction programmes.

Measures to Increase Satwika Gunas: To overcome the Rajasika & Tamasika doshas the Satwika qualities should be increased through the administration of Satwika Ahara, Satwika tapa (shareerika, vachika and manasika tapa) and Satwika yajna mentioned in Ayurveda as well as Bhagavad-Gita.

Upadha Chikitsa: Desire is the main cause in producing the psychological disturbances resulting in psychosomatic disorders. Through Upadha Chikitsa the eating disorders can be controlled in overweight & obesity^[12,13, 14].

Prajnaparadha Chikitsa: To get rid from the Prajnaparadha, tyaga, indriyopashama, sadvritta, aptopadesha can be advice to follow^[15].

To Strengthen Manas: To control the manas from its vishayas jnana, vijnana, dhairya, smriti & Samadhi are the good weapons^[16].

Yoga Chikitsa: Yoga can control the chitta vrittis and normalizes the manas. Through Ashtanga yoga the person can improve the ekanta and nirodha, which are useful to control the abnormal functioning of mind. Good conduct, physical health, mental health and spiritual health can be attained by continuous practice of Ashtanga yoga.

Satwavajaya Chikitsa: Psycho therapy, behavioral therapy, counseling, assurances are required to control the emotions as well as stress. Through satwavajaya we can get good results in overweight & obesity by controlling & maintaining the proper functions of the mind, diverting the mind from the unnecessary things^[17].

Rasayana Chikitsa: Achara rasayana^[18], sadvritta can be administered to improve good conduct and the quality of the life. To increase the buddhi and smriti medhya rasayanas are helpful.

Sthoulya Chikitsa: Along with above psychiatric treatment the obesity treatment should also be administered like nidana parivarjana, vatahara annapana, shleshma medohara chikitsa, Ruksha ushna teekshna basti, Ruksha udvartana, ratrijagarana^[19], vyavaya, Vyayama, chinta along with Apatarpana Chikitsa^[20].

The person who will pursue his own habits and activities will never get any type of disease^[21]. The person who knows about the compatibility of Ahara, Achara, by Bsheshaja to his body will have strong psyche and good health. The overweight & obesity developed due to psychosomatic causes can be controlled successfully by following above mentioned life style & therapies.

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