



A Critical Appraisal of Dietary Regimens (*Pathya-Apathya*) for *Sthaulya* in the *Yogaratanakara*

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: *Sthaulya* (obesity) is described in Ayurveda as a *Santarpanottha Vyadhi* caused by excessive nourishment and abnormal accumulation of *Meda Dhatu*. It is associated with aggravation of *Kapha Dosha*, *Agnimandya*, and *Srotorodha*, leading to various metabolic disturbances. Improper dietary habits such as excessive consumption of *Guru*, *Snigdha*, *Madhura Ahara*, along with sedentary lifestyle factors like *Avyayama*, *Diwaswapna*, and *Atinidra*, play a significant role in its development. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of *Pathya Ahara* and *Vihara* (wholesome diet and lifestyle) as a fundamental component in the management and prevention of diseases, including *Sthaulya*.

Materials and Methods: The present study is a literary review primarily based on the Ayurvedic text *Yogaratanakara*, particularly the *Medoroga Chikitsa Adhyaya* from the *Uttarardha* section. Relevant information regarding *Nidana*, *Purvarupa*, *Rupa*, *Samprapti*, *Chikitsa*, and *Pathya Ahara-Vihara* was collected and systematically compiled from the text and related literature.

Observation: The study identified several etiological factors responsible for *Sthaulya*, including excessive intake of *Madhura*, *Snigdha*, *Guru Ahara*, *Navanna*, *Dadhi*, *Ikshu Vikara*, and sedentary habits such as lack of exercise and excessive sleep. *Pathya Ahara* recommended in *Yogaratanakara* includes *Purana Shali*, *Mudga*, *Kulattha*, *Kodrava*, *Yava*, *Shyamaka*, and *Madhu*, while *Pathya Vihara* includes *Shrama*, *Adhwa*, *Vyavaya*, and *Ratri Jagarana*. Analysis of the *Rasapanchaka* of these *Dravya* reveals predominance of *Kashaya Rasa*, *Laghu* and *Ruksha Guna*, and *Medohara* or *Lekhaniya* properties, which reduces excessive *Meda Dhatu* and support weight management.

Discussion: *Pathya Ahara* plays a key role in the management of *Sthaulya*, as it helps reduce excess *Meda* through its *Laghu* and *Ruksha* properties. Millets, due to their high fiber and low glycemic index, support weight and metabolic control. The Mediterranean diet shows similar benefits by promoting balanced, wholesome eating, improving digestion, reducing inflammation, and supporting gut health. Thus, combining Ayurvedic dietary principles with millet-based foods and Mediterranean concepts provides an effective and practical approach for managing *Sthaulya*.

Conclusion: This review highlights the key role of *Pathya Ahara* in managing *Sthaulya* by improving metabolism and reducing excess *Meda Dhatu*. Therefore, combining Ayurvedic dietary practices with modern nutritional approaches offers an effective and sustainable strategy for the prevention and management of *Sthaulya*.

KEYWORDS: Sthaulya, Pathya-Apathya, Yogaratnakara, Medoroga, Pathya Ahara, Lekhaniya

INTRODUCTION

Sthaulya (obesity) is considered a disorder caused by excessive nourishment, known as *Santarpanottha Vyadhi*, which leads to abnormal accumulation of *Meda Dhatu*. It is not simply an increase in body weight; rather, it represents a complex metabolic imbalance involving aggravation of *Kapha Dosha*, excessive formation of *Meda Dhatu*, *Agnimandya* (weakened digestive power), and *Srotorodha* (blockage of the body's channels). Classical Ayurvedic texts explain that *Apathya Ahara*, *Vishamashana* (unhealthy eating patterns), *Avyayama* (sedentary way of life), *Ati Guru*, *Snigdha*, *Madhura Ahara Sevana* (frequent consumption of heavy, oily, and sweet foods), *Diwaswapna* (daytime sleeping), and *Avyavaya*, *Avyayama* (lack of physical activity) are major factors responsible for its development. Among the different approaches to treatment, strict regulation of diet and lifestyle through *Pathya* (recommended habits) and avoidance of *Apathya* (harmful habits) is regarded as the most important aspect of management.ⁱ

मेदोमांसातिवृद्धत्वाच्चलस्फिगुदरस्तनः।

अयथोपचयोत्साहो नरोऽतिस्थूल उच्यते॥९॥ⁱⁱ

According to the Charaka Samhita, an *Atisthula Purusha* is a person exhibiting an abnormal and excessive accumulation of *Medo Dhatu* along with *Mamsa Dhatu*, leading to sagging of the buttocks, abdomen, and breasts. This physical enlargement is not accompanied by a proportional increase in strength or energy.

Sthaulya and *Karshya* are influenced by both the quality and quantity of *Ahara Rasa*, the nutritional essence derived from food.ⁱⁱⁱ

Acharya Kashyapa regarded *Ahara* (food) itself as a form of *Bheshaja* (medicine), emphasizing that the right diet can both prevent and treat disease. He highlighted that only wholesome, *Hitakara Ahara* (beneficial food) sustains health and promotes well-being. His teachings underline the therapeutic and preventive value of proper nutrition in maintaining overall health.^{iv}

The term *Pathya* is derived from the word meaning “*Path*” or “that which is suitable for the body.” It refers to practices especially dietary and lifestyle habits that support both physical and mental well-being. According to *Charaka Samhita*, *Pathya Ahara* is food that produces beneficial effects on the body and mind without causing any harmful consequences, thereby helping to maintain health and support recovery from disease.^v

Diet is considered fundamental to health because both the human body and food are made up of the five basic elements (*Panchamahabhutas*).^{vi} All tissues and organs of the body are nourished through proper nutrition. Wholesome eating supports physical growth and vitality, whereas unhealthy dietary habits can lead to disease. The balance of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala* forms the foundation of a healthy body, and appropriate *Pathya* helps in nourishing these components and maintaining their equilibrium.

For the management of *Sthaulya* (obesity), various Acharyas have described different treatment approaches in different classical texts. However, along with medicinal therapy, the role of a proper wholesome diet is equally important. Following an appropriate *Pathya* during the course of treatment enhances the effectiveness of therapy and supports better outcomes. In fact, treatment alone may not produce optimal results unless it is

combined with suitable dietary regulation. Therefore, along with prescribed medicines and procedures, adherence to a wholesome diet is essential for the successful management of the disease.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study is a narrative literature review based primarily on Yogaratnakara (*Medoroga Chikitsa Adhyaya, Uttarardha*). Additional data were collected from classical texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya. Relevant modern information was gathered from research articles, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses using databases like PubMed and Google Scholar with keywords related to *Sthaulya*, millets, and Mediterranean diet. The collected data were analyzed and compiled to correlate Ayurvedic concepts with modern scientific evidence.

Observations

Nidana^{vii}

- *Atisampurnata*
- *Adhyashana*
- *Guru, Madhura, Shita, Snigdha Ahara sevana*
- *Navanna sevana*
- *Nava Madya sevana*
- *Gramya, Audaka Mamsarasa Sevana*
- *Dadhi Sevana*
- *Payasa Vikara Sevana*
- *Masha Sevana*
- *Godhuma Sevana*
- *Ikshu Vikara Sevana*
- *Bhojanottara Jala Sevana, Bhojanottara Nidra*
- *Avyayama, Avyavaya, Diwaswapna, Achinta, Atinidra*
- *Asana Sukha*
- *Bijadosha Swabhavata*
- *Snigdha Udvartana*
- *Snigdha Madhura Basti Sevana*
- *Tailabhyanga*

Purvarupa^{viii}

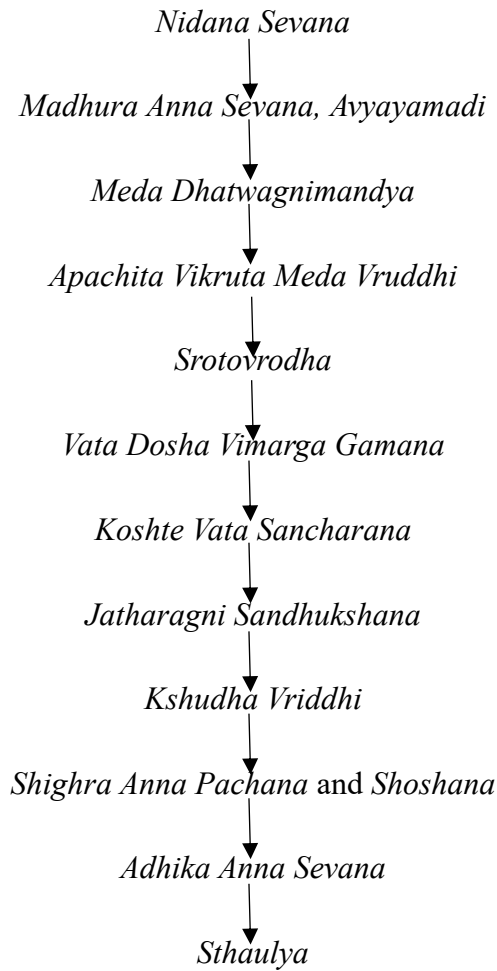
The symptoms of *Medovaha Srotodushti* (disturbance of the channels carrying fat tissue), which are also described as the *Purvarupa* (early signs) of *Prameha*, can also be considered as the early warning signs of *Sthaulya* (obesity).

Rupa^{ix}

- *Alpayu*
- *Javoparodha*
- *Kricchvyavayata*
- *Daurbalya*
- *Daurgandhyata*
- *Swedabadha*

- *Kshudhadhikya*
- *Trishnadhikya*
- *Chala Sphika*
- *Chala Udara*
- *Chala Stana*
- *Utsaha Hani*
- *Ayathopachaya*
- *Nidradhikya*

Samprapati^x



Chikitsa

Sthaulya (obesity) is considered a *Santarpana-janya Vyadhi*, meaning it arises due to over-nourishment and excessive intake. Therefore, its management primarily involves *Guru, Apatarpana Chikitsa*^{xi} (de-nourishing or reducing therapies). Depending on the patient's condition, strength, stage of disease, and associated factors, different therapeutic approaches may be selected. These include *Langhana* (lightening therapies), *Rukshana* (drying therapies), *Shamana* (palliative measures), and *Shodhana* (purificatory procedures), which are administered appropriately according to individual needs.^{xii}

Pathya Ahara and Vihara

In the management of *Sthaulya Roga*, *Pathya Ahara* and *Vihara* include *Purana Shali*, *Mudga*, *Kulattha*, *Kodrava*, *Madhu*, *Yava-Shyamakbhajana*, *Shrama*, *Chinta*, *Vyavaya*, *Adhwa*, *Ratri jagrana*.

Table no. 1- Pathya Ahara Vihara^{xiii}

<i>Pathya Ahara</i>	<i>Pathya Vihara</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Purana Shali</i> ▪ <i>Mudga</i> ▪ <i>Kulattha</i> ▪ <i>Kodrava</i> ▪ <i>Madhu</i> ▪ <i>Yava-Shyamakbhajana</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Shrama</i> ▪ <i>Chinta</i> ▪ <i>Vyavaya</i> ▪ <i>Adhwa</i> ▪ <i>Ratri jagrana</i>

Rasapanchaka of Pathya Ahara

Here, the *Rasapanchaka* of the *Pathya Dravyas* used in the management of *Sthaulya Roga* is explained, which includes *Purana Shali*, *Mudga*, *Kulattha*, *Kodrava*, *Madhu* and *Yava-Shyamakbhajana*.

Table no.- 2 Rasapanchaka of Pathya Ahara^{xiv xv xvi}

<i>Dravya</i>	<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Guna</i>	<i>Virya</i>	<i>Vipaka</i>	<i>Doshagnata</i>
<i>Shimbi Dhanya</i>					
<i>Mudga (Vigna mungo L.)</i>	<i>Kashaya, Madhura</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha, Grahi</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Pittashamaka, Alpa Vatakara</i>
<i>Kulattha (Dolichos biflorus Linn.)</i>	<i>Kashaya</i>	<i>Laghu, Sara</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Medohara, Kapha-vata hara</i>
<i>Shali Dhanya</i>					
<i>Purana Shali (Oryza sativa Linn.)</i>	<i>Madhura, Kashaya</i>	<i>Laghu, Snigdha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Pitta Shamaka</i>
<i>Shuka Dhanya</i>					
<i>Kodrava (Paspalum scrobiculatum Linn.)</i>	<i>Madhura, Kashaya</i>	<i>Laghu</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Pitta-Kapha Nashaka</i>
<i>Yava (Hordeum vulgare Linn.)</i>	<i>Kashaya, Madhura</i>	<i>Ruksha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kapha-Pitta Hara, Shleshma Meda Nashaka</i>
<i>Shyamaka (Echinochloa frumentacea)</i>	-	<i>Ruksha</i>	-	-	<i>Kapha-Pitta Hara</i>
<i>Madhu Varga</i>					
<i>Madhu</i>	<i>Madhura, Kashaya</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha</i>	<i>Shita</i>	-	<i>Kapha, Meda Hara</i>

The *Pathya Dravya* employed in the management of *Sthaulya Roga* predominantly share attributes such as *Kashaya Rasa*, *Laghu* and *Ruksha Guna*, *Meda Nashaka* and *Lekhaniya* properties of *Mudga*, *Kulattha*, *Kodrava*, *Shyamaka*, *Madhu* and *Yava*. These collective properties of *Dravya* helps in *Lekhana karma* of body and reduces excessive *Meda Dhatu*.

DISCUSSION

पथ्ये सति गदातस्य किमौषधिनिषेवणो ।

पथ्येऽसति गदातस्य किमौषधिनिषेवणो ॥ (Vaidya Jivan 1/10)

Pathya itself can act as a form of treatment, even without the use of medicines. However, if *Pathya* is not followed, medicines alone may not produce effective results^{xvii}.

Ayurveda adopts a holistic approach to health management. It gives significant importance to food in disease management, recognizing it both as a causative factor (*Apathya*) and as a therapeutic measure (*Pathya*). Since improper dietary habits are considered a major cause of many diseases, Ayurveda addresses *Pathya Vyavastha* (dietary planning and nutrition) in a systematic and scientific way. Daily regimens, seasonal routines, and lifestyle practices are also essential for maintaining health, and the Acharyas have included all these aspects within the concept of *Pathya* and *Apathya*.

Sthaulya is *Santarpana Janya Vyadhi* which characterised by *Medo Vriddhi* in the body, so all the *Pathya Ahara* mentioned in *Yogaratanakara* help in reduction of *Meda Dhatu* by their *Laghu*, *Ruksha Guna* which are contrary to the *Meda Dhatu*.

Modern Nutritional and Functional Properties of Millets

Millets (*Shyamaka*, *Kodrava*, *Kangu*, etc.) are highly aligned with Ayurvedic principles for *Sthaulya* management due to their *Laghu*, *Ruksha*, and *Kapha-Medohara* properties.

1. Low Glycemic Index and Glycemic Control^{xviii xix}

Millets exhibit a low to moderate glycemic index (GI) compared to refined cereals like rice and wheat.

This results in:

- Slow digestion and absorption of carbohydrates
- Gradual release of glucose into the bloodstream
- Prevention of postprandial glucose spikes

Evidence from Studies:

- Meta-analyses (2021, 2022):^{xx}
 - BMI reduction: ~7.0% (SMD -0.18 to -0.29)
 - Total Cholesterol (TC): ↓ 8–10% (SMD -0.44)
 - Triglycerides (TG): ↓ ~9.5% (SMD -0.29)
 - LDL: ↓ ~9–10% (SMD -0.60)
 - VLDL: ↓ (SMD -0.41)
 - HDL: ↑ ~6%
 - In some trials, TC normalized <200 mg/dL

2. High Dietary Fibre and Satiety Regulation^{xxi}

Millets are rich in dietary fibre (8–12%), including both soluble and insoluble fractions. Their fibre content:

- Increases satiety and reduces hunger signals
- Delays gastric emptying
- Reduces total energy intake

- Helps in weight management
- Improves bowel movement and gut health
- Reduces lipid absorption

3. Hypolipidemic and Cardioprotective Effects^{xxii}

Millet consumption has been associated with significant improvements in lipid profile:

- Decrease in total cholesterol and LDL
- Reduction in triglycerides
- Increase in HDL cholesterol

The concept of *Pathya Ahara* described in Ayurveda inherently reflects what is now globally recognized as the Mediterranean diet. Classical Ayurvedic texts advocate the intake of *Laghu*, *Ruksha*, and *easily digestible foods* such as whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables, along with appropriate use of *Sneha*, to maintain *Agni* and prevent *Kapha–Meda vridhhi*.^{xxiii} In the modern era, extensive research on the Mediterranean diet has validated these principles. This dietary pattern has been shown to support weight management, improve insulin sensitivity, reduce cardiovascular risk, and lower systemic inflammation (1–3). These effects are largely attributed to its high fibre content, low glycaemic load, and abundance of polyphenols and antioxidants, which align with Ayurvedic concepts of *Agni Deepana*, *Ama Pachana*, and *Kapha–Meda Shamana*. Additionally, its positive influence on gut microbiota reflects the Ayurvedic principles of *Srotoshodhana* and metabolic balance.^{xxiv} In this context, millets such as *Yava*, *Shyamaka*, and *Kodrava* can be considered Ayurvedic-compatible equivalents, offering similar benefits like low glycaemic index and improved metabolic regulation.^{xxv} Thus, the Mediterranean diet can be viewed as a modern scientific validation of the timeless Ayurvedic concept of *Pathya Ahara*.

The Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India, has published a book titled “Traditional Food Recipes from AYUSH Systems of Medicine,”^{xxvi} which compiles various traditional dietary preparations recommended for health promotion and management of lifestyle disorders, including obesity. These recipes emphasize the use of wholesome ingredients, spices, and traditional cooking methods that support digestion, metabolism, and weight management. The book recommends several dietary preparations for the management of *Sthaulya*. These include Mudga Yusha, Besan Suji Pancake, Peya, mixed millet drumstick leaves dosa (pancake), Mamsa Rasa, Kullatha Rasam, and whole cereal vegetable pulav, all of which emphasize light, wholesome, and metabolically supportive foods.

CONCLUSION

This review highlights the importance of *Pathya Ahara* in managing *Medoroga* as described in *Yogaratanakara*. Since *Sthaulya* arises from over-nourishment and improper habits, its management focuses on reducing excess through appropriate diet and lifestyle. The recommended foods are light, dry, and metabolism-enhancing, helping to reduce excess *Meda Dhatu* and correct imbalance.

Millets like *Yava*, *Shyamaka*, and *Kodrava* further support this by providing high fibre and low glycemic benefits. The similarities between Ayurvedic *Pathya* and the Mediterranean diet emphasize the continued relevance of these traditional principles. Ayurveda clearly states that without proper *Ahara* and *Vihara*, medicines alone are ineffective, making them essential for both prevention and treatment of *Sthaulya*.

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