



Research Article

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Short and Long term effects of Overeating (*Atimatrashan*) on health and well-being: A Conceptual Study

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ABSTRACT

Overeating is the excess food consumed in relation to the energy that an organism expends. Out of various eating disorders overeating from supersize meal portions is termed as *Atimatrashan* in *Ayurveda*. In *Ayurveda* great emphasis has been given on the ideal quantity i.e., '*matra*' of *Aahara* which is customized according to individual appetite. While occasional overeating predisposes to various disorders manifested through impaired digestive function, Habitual overeating eventually leads to obesity. Obesity being a state of chronic inflammation predisposes to wide range of diseases including Metabolic syndrome and Cancer. In this context, this paper discusses the Ayurvedic concept of *Tridosha Prakop* (vitiation of all the three *Doshas*) with the resulting ailments and *Aamvish* which is said to be formed as a result of habitual overeating and is thought to be *Vishadrushya* (highly toxic) and *param asaadhya* (incurable).

Keywords: Overeating, *Atimatrashan*, *Tridosha Prakop*, *Aamvish*, Obesity, Metabolic Syndrome, Cancer.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the easy availability of food resources with minimum physical energy expenditure especially in urban areas has paved a way for overconsumption of food. Overeating is the excess food consumed in relation to the energy that an organism expends [1]. Overeating can also be as a result of underlying physical, mental or emotional illness. But, most of the times it is because of lack of awareness about the right measures of food intake.

Ayurveda greatly emphasizes on consuming the meals in proportion which is customized in terms of individual appetite. The ideal *Matra* (measure) of *Ahara* as per *Ayurveda* is in accord with three divisions of stomach capacity – one third of which is for solid food, one third for liquids and remaining one-third for the full play of the three *Doshas* – *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* [2]. Eating in conformity to this rule, one is not liable to anyone of the ill-effects resulting from eating without measure [3]. Whilst, inadequate diet or eating to repletion may lead to various ill-effects.

In the light of *Ayurveda* Overeating can further be classified into two subtypes:

A) *Atimatrashan* - This term means eating upto repletion and beyond.

B) *Adhyashan* – This term means the meal which is taken before previous meal has been digested.

While occasional overeating predisposes to various disorders manifested through impaired digestive function, habitual overeating may lead to number of diseases enlisted further in this study and also overeating eventually leads to obesity- which is a state of chronic inflammation which may predispose metabolic syndrome or cancer [4].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Type of Research: Literary

Site: Ayurveda Samhita and Siddhant Department, RAPMC, Mumbai.

Method Of Study

1] All the references in *The Charak Samhita* with *Chakrapani commentary* regarding *Atimatrashan* and *Ajirnaadhyashan* were compiled and analyzed.

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2] Previously published Research Articles related to effects of overeating were referred and analyzed.

3] Previously published Research Articles regarding *Aam* and *Aamvisha* were referred and analyzed.

4] Research Papers and Articles related to Free Radical Theory and Oxidative Stress were referred and analysed.

5] Systematic presentation of Long and Short term effects of Overeating on Health is done.

RESULTS

As per Ayurveda Overeating serves as Etiological Factor for wide range of diseases which are enlisted below:

a) In this treatise, *Charak Samhita* the author has enlisted the *Agyra Sangrah* i.e., the list of foremost among things. In this context *Charak* has mentioned *Atimatrashan* i.e., overeating as the foremost among the *Aampradosh hetu* ^[5] (causes of formation of *Aam* in the body). *Aam* is the product form in the body as a result of improper digestion of food resulting from improper diet and lifestyle and this *Aam* is said to be the root cause of all illnesses as per Ayurveda.

In modern parlance, *Ama* maybe referred to be free radicals which are intermedial byproduct of metabolism, which have a tendency to block the microchannels of various systems of the body ^[6]. At low or moderate concentrations free radicals are necessary for the maturation process of cellular structures and can act as weapons for the host defense system ^[7]. When an overload of free radicals cannot gradually be destroyed, there accumulation in the body generates a phenomenon called oxidative stress. This process plays a major part in the development of chronic and development illnesses such as cancer, autoimmune disorders, aging, cataract, rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases ^[8].

b) Indulgence in Overeating is one important factor of the Etiology of Blood Vitiating ^[9].

The Vitiating Blood may causes one or more of the following disorders as per Ayurveda:

1. <i>Mukhpaka</i>	Sores in Mouth
2. <i>Akshiroga</i>	Infected Condition of eyes
3. <i>Putighranasyagandhita</i>	Halitosis
4. <i>Gulma</i>	Gulma
5. <i>Upkush</i>	A Gum Disorder
6. <i>Visarpa</i>	Acute spreading affections
7. <i>Raktapitta</i>	Hemorrhagic disorders
8. <i>Pramilaka</i>	Sleepiness
9. <i>Vidradhi</i>	Abscess
10. <i>Raktameha</i>	Hematuria
11. <i>Pradar</i>	Menorrhagia
12. <i>Vaatshonit</i>	Gout
13. <i>Vaivarnya</i>	Discoloration
14. <i>Agnisaad</i>	Asthenia of digestive fire

15. <i>Pipasa</i>	Excessive thirst
16. <i>Gurugatrata</i>	Heaviness in Limbs
17. <i>Santaap</i>	Burning
18. <i>Agnidourbalya</i>	Weakness of Digestive Fire
19. <i>Aruchi</i>	Anoerxia
20. <i>Shirasch Rook</i>	Headache
21. <i>Vidaahannapaanashya</i>	Misdigestion of food and drinks
22. <i>Tiktaamlogiran</i>	Bitter and acid eructation
23. <i>Klama</i>	Exhaustion
24. <i>Krodha Prachurta</i>	Excessive Irritability
25. <i>Buddhi Sammoha</i>	Delusions Of Understanding
26. <i>Lavanasyata</i>	Saline Taste in Mouth
27. <i>Nidraatiyog</i>	Hypersomnia
28. <i>SharirDourgandhya</i>	Fetor of the body
29. <i>Mad</i>	Intoxication
30. <i>Kamp</i>	Tremors
31. <i>Swarkshay</i>	Aphonia
32. <i>Tandra</i>	Torpor
33. <i>Tamasch Atidarshanam</i>	Frequent attacks of fainting
34. <i>Kandu, Kotha, Pidika, Kushta</i>	Pruritis, Boils, Pimples, Dermatitis
35. <i>Charmadaladayaa</i>	Rashes and similar disorders

c) Immediate or Short Term Effects of Overeating Include:

According to *Charak*, he who consumes solid food to repletion and in addition drinks his fill of beverages will have all the three *Doshas- Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha* abiding in the stomach provoked simultaneously as they get compressed greatly by the excessive quantity of food taken. These *Doshas* being thus irritated, lay hold of the undigested food mass and getting localized in one part of stomach of the man who has overeaten, and making their resort in the food-mass, either obstruct or dispose off the stomach contents violently through the upper or the lower channels of the alimentary tract, giving rise severally to the following kinds of disorders ^[10].

1) Due to *Vata Dasha*:

<i>Shul</i>	Colic
<i>Anaha</i>	Constipation
<i>Angamarda</i>	Bodyache
<i>Mukhashosh</i>	Parching of mouth
<i>Murccha</i>	Fainting
<i>Bhrama</i>	Giddiness
<i>Agnivaishamy</i>	Irregularity of gastric fire
<i>Parshvaprushtakatigrah</i>	Rigidity of sides, back and waist
<i>Sirakunchan</i>	Contraction
<i>Sirastambhan</i>	Hardening of vessels

2) Due to *Pitta Dosh*:

<i>Jwara</i>	Fever
<i>Atisaar</i>	Diarrhoea
<i>Antardaah</i>	Burning sensation
<i>Trshna</i>	Thirst
<i>Mad</i>	Intoxication
<i>Bhram</i>	Giddiness
<i>Pralaap</i>	Delirium

3) Due to *Kapha Dosh*:

<i>Chardi</i>	Vomiting
<i>Aarochak</i>	Anorexia
<i>Avipaak</i>	Indigestion
<i>Sheet jwara</i>	Algid Fever
<i>Aalasya</i>	Torpor
<i>Gaatra Gaurav</i>	Heaviness of Limbs

d) The Effects Of Long Term Overeating on Health:

According to *Charaka*, the '*sheelan of Ajirnaadhyashan*' (habitual intake of predigestion meals) is said to cause *Aamvish* in the body. It is called '*vish*' owing to its highly toxic nature. This byproduct of digestion formed as a result of habitual overeating and consumption of predigestion meals is said to cause toxemia and is said to cause toxemia and is absolutely irremediable.

With the fact that *Aam* is correlated with free radicals, *Aamvish* can be related to advanced stage of chronic accumulation of *Aam* in the body. As enlisted above, this accumulation plays an important role in development of chronic and degenerative illnesses such as cancer, autoimmune disorders, aging, cataract, rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases. In this context, Overeating which is an obscure factor must be considered while studying the etiopathogenesis of these diseases.

e) Other diseases manifested through *Ajirna - Adhyashana* are:

- I) Vitiatio*n of Purishvah Strotas* (channels of defecation),
- II) *Pittaj Gulma, Pittaj Udar, Ardhavbhedak* (Migraine)
- III) *Visarpa* (Acute spreading infections like Impetigo, Folliculitis, Ganglion, Gas gangrene, Necrotizing Fasciitis, Cellulitis, etc.)

DISCUSSIONS

Ayurveda focuses on threefold approach of treatment where the *Hetu* (cause of disease), *Linga* (clinical features) and *Aushadh* (treatment) are considered of equal importance in diagnosis and management of the disease. *Charak Samhita*, which is considered to be the foremost in treatment among all the Ayurvedic literatures enlists various ailments caused due to overeating in form of *Atimatrashan* and *Ajirnaadhyashan*.

In present times, the prevalence of binge eating or overeating is very common especially amongst the teenagers and the young adults. Overeating eventually leads to Obesity. The prevalence of overweight and obesity is increasing worldwide, and the evidence base for a link between obesity and cancer is growing. In the United States, approximately 85,000 new cancer cases per year are related to obesity. Recent research has found that as the body mass index increases by 5kg/m², cancer mortality increases by 10% [11].

In 2005 and in 2007, the World Cancer Research Fund(WCRF) published comprehensive reviews of the international evidence that pointed to the relationship between food, nutrition, physical activity and prevention of cancer. The WCRF concluded that there is convincing epidemiological and plausible mechanism evidence for the link between excessive body fatness (BMI) and the following cancers: oesophageal adenocarcinoma, pancreatic cancer, endometrial cancer and kidney cancer [12].

This study enlists a wide range of disorders from digestive disturbances to diseases leading to terminal illnesses caused by habitual overeating. The awareness regarding overeating as an etiological factor of various idiopathic ailments aims at establishing conscious intake of food in adequate measures as advised in Ayurvedic treatises for prevention of diseases and maintenance of *Swasthaya* (Healthy Life).

CONCLUSION

In Ayurveda, *Atimatrashan* (overeating) is considered to be the foremost among the *Aam pradosh hetu* (causes of *Aam* accumulation). As per Ayurveda *Aam* is considered to be the root cause of all ailments. Various researches have correlated *Aam* with free radicals which when accumulated in excess body generates a phenomenon called oxidative stress. This process plays a major part in the development of chronic and development illnesses such as cancer, autoimmune disorders, aging, cataract, rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases. In the context, we conclude that habitual overeating and eating upto repletion should be considered as important etiological factor in diseases of idiopathic origin as it can lead to any of the wide range of diseases from vitiation of blood to diseases causing terminal illnesses like cancer.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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