

REVIEW ARTICLE ON KARSHYA AND MALNOURISHMENT**Vd. Supriya Mane*¹, Vd. Jayprakash Khairnar² and Vd. Shelavale³**

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda focuses more on preventing health issues rather than just treating them. It stresses the importance of eating well to stay healthy. According to Ayurveda, eating a well-balanced diet following proper guidelines can help prevent many common health problems. Food isn't just about giving your body the right nutrients, it can also help you recover from illnesses, regain strength after treatment, and cope with excessive exercise or addictions. Every illness is linked to what we eat and how we live. Following proper dietary and lifestyle practices is crucial for getting the best benefits from the food we eat. It's believed that about 35% of deaths in children under five years old and 21% of total disabilities worldwide in children are caused by poor nutrition during childhood. Karshya is a condition similar to being undernourished. Malnutrition is a type of illness connected to the digestive system. It happens when someone doesn't get enough

proteins and calories in their diet for a long time. Karshya isn't just about losing weight; it's also related to malnutrition. In Ayurveda, Karshya is seen as both a disease and a sign of various health issues. It can show up as early symptoms of illness or indicate a poor prognosis. Karshya is also seen as a natural condition in people with a certain body type called Vataja prakriti. This condition is especially concerning for children and teenagers because it can affect their growth and development. In adults, malnutrition can lead to weakness, tiredness, a weaker immune system, and deficiencies in important nutrients like

proteins, vitamins, and minerals, making them more prone to diseases that affect their body's functions. This review article focuses on the Ayurvedic view of Karsha, which is a type of malnutrition. It gathers information from ancient Ayurvedic texts to understand the causes, how it affects the body, and the best treatments according to these texts. The article goes into detail about why Karsha happens and how it impacts the body, as well as what the classical Ayurvedic texts recommend for treating it accurately.

KEYWORDS: Karshya, Undernutrition, Malnutrition, Nutritional Deficiency, *Ahara*, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

Malnutrition happens when your body doesn't get enough or gets too much of the important stuff it needs. This can lead to being undernourished, overnourished, having an unbalanced diet, or lacking certain specific nutrients. There are two main types of malnutrition: one where you don't get enough protein and energy, and another where you're lacking important vitamins and minerals. To check if someone is undernourished, we might measure their arm size, waist and hip ratio, or calculate their BMI using weight and height.^[1]

This impacts on children during their most important growing years and can cause lasting problems as they grow up. malnutrition is assessed by looking at whether a child is underweight (weighs too low for their age), stunted (is too short for their age), or wasted (weighs too little for their height).

Undernutrition happens when someone doesn't eat enough food for a long time, leading to a low BMI (Body Mass Index) of less than 18.5. In severe cases, it's called starvation when the BMI drops below 16. This occurs because the body doesn't get enough nutrients either because of not eating enough, not absorbing them well, losing them too much, or when there's extra demand on the body such as during pregnancy, growth, or certain diseases. Malnutrition covers both undernutrition and overnutrition.

Karshya arises from undernutrition when a baby receives insufficient nourishment due to decreased food intake. This can occur if the mother consumes foods and engages in activities that increase Vata dosha, and if the baby consumes breast milk with an imbalance in Vata dosha. This ultimately leads to the baby becoming malnourished.^[2]

The word Karshya is derived from Tanukarane dhatu which means Alpa, Suskshma.

According to Dalhanacharya, Karshya shows signs of weakness, lack of strength, and poor appearance. In Ayurveda, food holds great importance as the first pillar of health. Digestive fire, known as Agni, is essential for turning food into nutrition. When digestion is weak, it leads to malnutrition. According to Acharya Charaka, both excessively thin and excessively overweight individuals are considered undesirable. Karshya is associated with various stages and symptoms of diseases and is often a sign of chronic illness.

Children who are still growing are the most impacted by malnutrition. Their health and nutrition status reflect the overall well-being of their community. Additionally, pregnant women, those with increased workload, long-term illnesses, or recovering from surgery often experience significant challenges due to malnutrition.

Undernutrition affects both girls and boys equally. It's more common in rural areas than in cities. Many children become malnourished during their first six months, often because they were born with low weight. Introducing inappropriate foods also contributes to the risk of malnutrition. Undernutrition happens when people don't eat enough and get sick frequently. It results in being too short and too light for their age. Worldwide attention is given to those who suffer from malnutrition, which can lead to conditions like kwashiorkor, marasmus, vision problems, anemia, goiter, and growth issues.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To Study the Karshya

To Study Malnutrition under Ayurvedic aspect.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The material related to the *Karshya* manuscript was collected from Ayurvedic classics such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Kashyap Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Astanga Sangraha*, Ghai Essential Pediatrics, text books of *Kaurmarabhritya* etc.

Etiological Factors (*Nidana*) of *Karshya*- Apart from diet, lifestyle and psychological factors also play a significant role in causing Karshya. These include consuming dry foods and drinks excessively, undergoing weight-reducing therapies, not eating enough, overusing purifying treatments, experiencing grief, suppressing natural urges, lack of sleep or sleep deprivation, dry powder massages, frequent bathing, hereditary factors, old age, prolonged illness, and anger. These factors collectively contribute to making a person lean or Karshya.^[3]

Intolerable Factors of *Karshya*

Individuals with *Karshya* cannot handle excessive physical exercise, overeating, hunger, thirst, illnesses, or medications. They also have low tolerance for extreme temperatures (too cold or too hot) and sexual activity.

Disease susceptibility of *Karshya* (*Upadrava*)

People with *Karshya* are more likely to suffer from diseases like spleen-related issues, cough, emaciation, difficulty breathing, abdominal tumors with pain, hemorrhoids, abdominal disorders.

Features (*Lakshana*) of *Karshya*- The extremely thin individual experiences loss of fat particularly from the buttocks, abdomen, and neck areas, leading to a dry appearance. They may have visible veins, and their skin and bones become more prominent, with noticeable joints.

Pathophysiology (*Samprapti*) of *Karshya*

Individuals who follow a diet and lifestyle that aggravates the Vata dosha, such as consuming foods that increase Vata, engaging in excessive physical activity, having frequent sexual intercourse, intense studying, experiencing anxiety, staying awake at night, feeling excessive thirst and hunger, using astringent substances, or practicing partial starvation, are at risk. In such cases, the circulating Rasa, or vital fluid, becomes insufficient to nourish the tissues properly, leading to extreme leanness or emaciation. *Vatadosha* vitiates *Dugdha*, especially *Vairasa* (tasteless) *Dugdha* which is the cause of *Krishsta* in children. Apart from *Vata prakriti*, *Vataja gada* are the cause of *Krishya* in children.^[4]

Karshya Samprapti

Vata vardhaka Ahara- Vihar (*Ruksha annapana, Pramitashana, Langhana, Ativyayama, Ativyavaya, Chinta, Shoka, Kradha* etc are the Etiological factors promote aggregation of *Vata dosha* results in *Upashoshana* of *Rasa dhatu* result in *Apreenana* or *Alpapreenana* which is Insufficient *Rasa Dhatu* fail to circulate whole body and fail to nourish subsequent *Dhatus* due to inadequacy and further symptoms like *Sushka sphiga, Udara, Griva Karshya*.

Factors involve in *Karshya* (*Samprapti Ghatak*) *Dosha- Vata*

Dushya- Rasa

Agni- Mandagni

Srotas- Rasavaha

Srotodushti- Sanga

Adhishthana- Sarva sharira, especially Sphiga, Udara, Griva, Twaka, Asthi.

Avastha- Chirakari and Asukari

According to modern, children under the age of five who show much slower physical growth compared to other children of the same age and gender are considered to have stunted development. When a child's weight falls below the 3rd or 5th percentile and they struggle to gain weight over time, or their growth rate shifts drastically, such as dropping from the 75th to the 50th percentile, it's called failure to thrive. In adults, having a BMI below 18.5 is considered malnutrition.

Lakshana of Karsha

1. *Sama sannipatika Jwara.*
2. *Vataja Unmada*
3. *Samanya lakshana of Udara*
4. *Vata-udara*
5. *Pleeha udara*
6. *Vataja Grahani*
7. *Kshyaja Kasa*
8. *Sleshmaja krimi*
9. *Purishja krimi*
10. *Arajaska yoni vyapad*
11. *Parigarbhika*
12. *Ksheraja Phakka*
13. *Vataja stanya dusti*
14. *Sahaja Arsha*

Causative factors (*Nidana*) of karsha Disease

1. *Udara*
2. *Vata udara*
3. *Gambhira Hikka*
4. *Sannipatika Atisara*
5. *Gulma*
6. *Shosha*

7. *Kshyaja Klaibya*

Purvarupa of Karsha diseases

1. *Arsha*
2. *Udara*

Bad prognostic sign of Karsha

1. *Shvayathu*
2. *Hikkka*

Complication (*Upadrava*)- Individuals get emaciated due to long term diseased condition (*Vyadhi karshita*).

According to samhita

Charakacharya emphasizes the importance of sound sleep, comfortable living conditions, a relaxed mind, happiness, avoiding excessive exercise, sexual activity, frequent bathing, using fragrances and garlands, and wearing white clothing as part of Karshya management.

According to Acharya Dalhana, continuous nourishing (*Brimhana*) is recommended for Karshya. Acharya Vagbhatta and Acharya Kashyapa also advocate *Brimhana* therapy.

Since Acharya Kashyapa categorizes Karshya under *Vatavyadhi*, *Brimhana* treatment is preferred.

Acharya Sharangadhara follows Kashyapa's perspective.

However, Acharya Bhavaprakash goes into detail about Karshya as a separate chapter, discussing its causes, progression, and treatment.

Acharya Yogaratnakara addresses Karshya in the context of *Medo-roga-nidanam*, with views similar to Charakacharya's.

After studying the teachings of ancient scholars, it's clear that they all agree on *Brimhana* therapy as the main treatment for Karshya. *Brimhana* aims to boost body mass and strength, addressing the root causes of leanness. It nourishes the body, providing vitality and counteracting the dryness associated with Vata dosha imbalance, a major contributor to tissue depletion.

Addressing psychological well-being is equally important and hence Charakacharya advises using calming fragrances and garlands to soothe the mind. Practices such as bathing, massage, and spending time with loved ones can promote sound sleep and mental health.

For older individuals with age-related Karshya or those dominated by Vata dosha, Brimhana therapy alone can be effective. Using sura (fermented alcoholic beverage) as Anupana with meals can aid in nutrient absorption and weight gain, thanks to its cleansing effect on the body's channels.

DISCUSSION

Karshya is a nutritional disorder outlined in Ayurvedic texts, potentially linked to malnutrition. Acharya Charaka categorizes excessively lean individuals among the eight undesirable types of people known as Ashtaunnditiyapurusha.. Ayurvedic texts don't extensively elaborate on Karshya, especially concerning children. However, Karshya, Balshosha, Parigarbhika, and Phakkaroga are mentioned, and they seem interconnected, possibly correlating to malnutrition.

Karshya primarily stems from inadequate and irregular eating habits (Alpashana and Vishamashana), lifestyle imbalances like excessive fatigue (Atishrama), and psychological factors such as grief, fear, and anger (Shoka, Bhaya, Krodha). The progression of Karshya involves aggravation of Vata, depletion of tissues due to dryness, and insufficient formation of bodily elements. Its treatment entails nourishing and strengthening therapies (Santarpana and Brimhana).

Karshya, classified under Rasaprodoshaja vikara in Ayurveda, bears resemblance to malnutrition in modern science. It can act as a primary trigger for various diseases. In Ayurveda, Karshya is recognized as a distinct disease entity, serving as both a causative factor and a precursor to symptoms, characterized by its own features and complications, with a negative prognostic significance (Arishta). According to Acharya Sushruta, both obesity (Sthaulya) and Karshya are influenced by the Rasa dhatu, while Acharya Charaka emphasizes the importance of diet (Ahara) and sleep (Nidra) as two of the three pillars of health(Trayoupstambha).

Karshya isn't discussed as a separate chapter in Balaroga. Ancient scholars mention nutritional deficiency disorders like Kshiraja Phakka and Parigarbhika, caused by insufficient

nutrients in the breast milk of pregnant mothers. Other related conditions include Phakka, Stanya dusti janita vyadhi, and more. Before treating children (Ksheerad), we need to address any issues with the mother's breast milk quality, especially if it's of Vatik variety causing Karshya. Treatment for both mother and baby should focus on improving nutrition and strength. According to Acharya Kashyapa, children with low urine and stool output and strong digestion but still lean are advised to undergo Lehan therapy if they haven't defecated for three days.

Avoid consuming spicy, bitter, and astringent foods, as well as empty foods like oil cakes and sour substances like buttermilk and honey. Refrain from excessive dry foods and activities, excessive exercise, overindulgence in sexual activity, and experiencing excessive anger, grief, or stress.

In terms of diet, individuals with Karshya should consume fresh grains like rice and wheat, milk and dairy products, meat, sugarcane products, wine, oil enemas, timely cleansing procedures, rejuvenation therapy, and aphrodisiac formulations. Acharya Sushruta suggests consuming sweet foods like milk, Ashwagandha, Shatavari, and other sweet substances, daytime naps, and celibacy.

CONCLUSION

Malnutrition, a well-defined concept in modern medicine, bears resemblance to various nutritional disorders described in Ayurveda, such as Karshya, Phakka, Parigarbhikaa, and Balshosha. A comprehensive study of these conditions sheds light on the dangers posed by nutritional deficiencies, offering insights into the different facets of such deficiencies. A thorough understanding of the pathogenesis of these conditions serves as a valuable guide for effective management strategies.

Malnutrition, a term commonly used in modern science, parallels the concept of Karshya in Ayurveda. Nutritional disorders remain a significant concern, particularly in developing countries like India. A comprehensive understanding of these conditions sheds light on the risks associated with inadequate nutrition and underscores the importance of addressing various aspects including diet, lifestyle, and psychological factors for effective treatment. Therefore, equal attention should be given to all these factors to ensure proper care and management.

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