



REVIEW ARTICLE

GRAHANI: A LIFESTYLE DISORDER

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ABSTRACT

Grahani is a seat of *agni* (Digestive fire). It retains the food till the food is fully digested and then passes it into *pakwashaya* (intestine). Functionally weak *Agni* i.e *mandagni* causes improper digestion of ingested food & leads to *Grahani roga*. *Grahani* is a disease of great clinical relevance in modern era because of its direct link with the improper food habits and stressful lifestyle of the present time. *Grahani roga's* pathogenesis revolves around *Agnidosha*, the seat of which is the structure described as *Grahani*. These are inseparable. Thus an impairment of integrity of *Grahani* may impair digestive function and state of *Agni* and vice versa. Vitiating of *Agni* causes disease, So for the treatment, concentration should be kept on management of *Agni*. Thus this article aims to give adequate knowledge about *Grahani* & its management by lifestyle modification & *Yoga* practices.

Key words : *Grahani, Agni, Pakwashaya, Yoga*

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INTRODUCTION

System of Ayurvedic medicine emphasizes much with the regards to the influence of diet & habits in the manifestation of every disease. *Grahani* is disease of great clinical relevance in modern era because of its direct link with the improper food habits and stressful lifestyle of the present time.

Grahani is a seat of agni. It retains the food till the food is fully digested and then passes it into *pakwasaya*. Functionally weak agni i.e *mandagni* causes improper digestion of ingested food which moves either in *urdhava* or *adho-marga*. When it goes into *adhomarga*, then it leads to *Grahani roga*.^[1]

Grahani roga is *tridoshatmaka*, disorder of digestive system occurs due to vitiation of *pachakagni*, *samanvayu* & *kledaka kapha*. It occurs with the symptomatology like *muhurbaddha-muhurdrava* *malapravrtti*, *amayukta* *malapravrtti*, *udarashoola*, *antrakujan*, *arochaka*, *klama* etc.^[2]

In *Ayurvedic* classics the basic approach to the entire problem of health is essentially psychosomatic in nature which was related to the state of equilibrium of factors namely *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* & *Agni* & a state of wellbeing of mental & spiritual forces (*Atma*, *Indriya* & *Mana*). *Rajas* & *tamas* are the morbid factors affecting the mind & *vata*, *pitta* & *kapha* are the morbid factors affecting the body. When they are in state of equipoise, the

body & mental health is good but when it become disturbed, the disease may occur.^[3] In *Ayurvedic* texts it is also states that improper digestion occurs due to increase in emotional factors. eg. *kama*, *krodha* etc. which leads to *agnidushti* & causes altered bowel habits.^[4]

Today everyone is struggling to get luxurious life. Due to busy schedule there is change in diet, diet timings & also lifestyle. In addition to this one is always under tremendous mental stress. All these factors contribute to disturb the digestive system, which result into many diseases.

Now a days man is moving very fast to achieve their goals & engaged to get extra money by using technology. Due to development of science many pesticides & chemicals are used to increase productivity, which in turn pollute the food. By eating this polluted food we disturb our GIT. In the same way polluted water also led to diseases of GIT.

Faulty eating practices are the number one culprit, poor food choices & poor food combining are next in line.^[5] Together they make up major cause of digestive diseases. The cause of digestive diseases lie in our action. By indulging our sense of taste in an unhealthy manor we upset the balance of the bodily *doshas*. *Vata* is upset by cold, dry & light foods such as raw vegetables. *Pitta* is upset by warm, oily foods such as fried vegetables & *Kapha* is upset by cold, heavy,

moist food such as ice-cream. In addition taking food in an improper manner can be even more harmful than choosing inappropriate foods. Healthy food taken in the wrong way we still cause digestive disease.^[6]

Now a days lifestyle also modified which includes irregular waking up time, late nights, irregular sitting & sleeping posture, excessive stressful workouts, lack of exercises are not directly effective in disease production but they play important role in aggravating disease.^[7]

The food we ingest is broken down in to the constituents that nourish the tissues & support our everyday functions. When digestive fire (*agni*) which burns within our stomach is affected by incorrect lifestyle & eating habits this ultimately affects the digestive process causing food to be either partially digested or overdigested leading to formation of *Ama* (toxins).

Grahani is a syndrome in which *agni*, the digestive power, is supposed to be at fault. When *agni* become depressed, *ama dosha* (undigested waste material) accumulates & it passed in the stool. So aim of treatment should be to enhance the potency of *agni*, thereby reducing the formation of *ama dosha*. Constitutional treatment include all habits that support healthy digestion. It is in fact more important how you eat than what you eat. While it sounds absurd, it is better to eat a

greasy hamburger than basmati rice improperly. Following proper guidelines for healthy eating will correct many digestive problems. Failure to follow them will most certainly cause most diseases. In addition to the healthy intake of food, proper food combining assist with proper digestion. From an *ayurvedic* perspective, eating bitters such as salad after a meal is better than doing so before. The bitter taste is cold & weakens *agni*. Taken at the beginning of meal it can diminish the digestion of all that follows. Likewise, desserts are best eaten before a meal or as between meal snack. Taken immediately after a meal it may upset digestion. Mixing foods of opposite potencies (*virya*) can sometime be problem.^[8]

Though *Ayurvedic* medicines are capable of regularizing the *agni* to normalcy, yoga exercises by virtue of their specificity, work as catalytic agents for stabilizing the *agni* at higher level even the medicines are withdrawn. This in itself is an important achievement, as medicines cannot be used permanently. The disease can only be considered as cured when the *agni* is balanced without use of any external medicine.

Many Yoga practices are helpful for relief of digestive disorders. They are as follows^[9]

1. *Bhujangasana* = “ By practising this *Bhujangasana*, *dehagni* (the heat of body)

increases, all diseases are destroyed & *kundalini* is aroused”

2. *Mayurasana* = “*Mayurasana* soon destroys all the diseases caused by *doshas* (undigested material) in the stomach. It kindles the *Jatharagni* (gastric fire) & completely digests all the unwholesome & overeaten food even poison”
3. *Paschimottanasana* = “ This *Paschimottanasana*, foremost among the *asanas*, directs the passage of *prana* along the back. It kindles the gastric fire (*jatharagni*), reduces the belly & bestows health upon the aspirants.”
4. *Matsyendrasana* = “ The practice of *Matsyendrasana*, which stimulates the *jatharagni* & is a weapon to destroy the disease around the umbilicus, bestows upon those person who practice it arousal of *kundalini* & stability of the *Chandra* (mind).”
5. *Sarvangasana* = “A yogi should always practice the beneficial *shitali kumbhaka*. He will never suffer from indigestion & disorders of *kapha* (phlegm) & *pitta* (bile).”
6. *Shatkarmas* = “*Nauli*, the crown of *Hatha Yoga* practices, stimulates the digestive metabolism & brings about a feeling of wellbeing.”

DISCUSSION

Grahani is a syndrome in which *agni*, the digestive power, is supposed to be at fault,

when *Agni* become depressed, *ama dosha* (undigested waste material) accumulates & it passes in the stool. So aim of treatment should be to enhance the potency of *agni*, thereby reducing the formation of *ama*.

The root cause of all diseases lies within the process of digestion. When the digestive system is working at its optimum supported by correct lifestyle & correct quality of food as per our individual *prakruti* the state of health maintained but when we follows incorrect lifestyle & eating habits ultimately affects the digestive process & leading to formation of *ama* (toxins).

Ancient *acharyas* understood that good digestion is key to radiant health & sought to understand the mind-body connection. Yoga poses work on soft tissues of the body. When the organs of the digestive system are compressed in poses, stale & waste- bearing fluids in those areas are freed up, the body is better able to eliminate them. When an area is opened or stretched out in a yoga pose, new life-giving nutrients are able to circulate into the cells. In this systemic way, yoga poses massage the vital organs associated with the digestive system, stimulate the digestive muscles & increase the peristalsis.^[10]

Conflict in the mind disturb the vital life forces (*Pancha vayu*) that affects the *Samana vayu* (responsible for digestion) & disturbed autonomic nervous system. When *Samana*

vayu is disturbed, there is an imbalance in *Apana vayu* in case of *Grahani* patients. Disturbed *vayu* causes imbalance in autonomic nervous system & bowel contractility issues. All these disturbances thought to be onset of *Grahani*. *Yoga* postures targeting the lower abdomen would help in relieving the symptoms of *Grahani* by enhancing bioenergy circulation in & around the intestine. Slow & deep breathing techniques could be used to minimize physiologic responses to stress by increasing parasympathetic response.^[11]

What you eat can contribute to digestive problems so eating healthy is solution for all these problems.

CONCLUSION

According to contemporary science, the disorders like anorexia, hyperacidity, IBS etc are due to modified lifestyle, irregular food habits & improperly balanced routine, sedentary lifestyle, busy workouts, excessive sitting, standing or travelling, sleep disturbances etc. The best way to manage these conditions by adopting normal healthy lifestyle, regular practice of *yoga, pranayam & sadvritta*.

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