



Review Article

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A CRITICAL REVIEW OF GRAHANI ROGA IN THE CONTEXT OF MANASIKA BHAVA

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ABSTRACT

The rise of Grahani Roga, a gastrointestinal ailment, can be attributed to factors like stress and poor dietary habits in modern lifestyles. Ayurvedic texts connect emotional states such as fear, anger, and sadness to imbalances in Dosha, underscoring the intricate link between mental and physical well-being. Stress disrupts the brain-gut axis, contributing to conditions like IBD, IBS, and GERD, which share symptoms with Grahani Roga, suggesting a potential psychosomatic origin. This article explores Ayurvedic principles of health, emphasizing the balance of Dosha, Agni, Dhātu, and Mala, as well as the role of a serene mind (Prasanna Atma, Indriya, and Mana) in managing Grahani Roga. It advocates integrating traditional Ayurvedic wisdom with modern medical approaches to tackle contemporary health challenges. Future research should delve into the psychosomatic aspects of these conditions to develop comprehensive diagnostic and treatment strategies that amalgamate Ayurvedic insights with modern medical knowledge.

Keywords: Grahani, Grahani Roga, Manasika Bhava, Psychosomatic disorder.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, the demands of a hectic and stressful lifestyle have been implicated in the emergence of numerous psychosomatic disorders, which subsequently compromise physical health. Recent scientific research has meticulously documented and characterized these conditions. Additionally, the ancient science of Ayurveda, with its profound understanding of holistic health, recognized and articulated the importance of mental well-being in maintaining overall health centuries ago.

Ayurveda emphasizes the holistic health of an individual through the balance and proper functioning of Dosha, Agni, Dhātu, and Mala, as well as the dynamic state of Atma, Indriya, and Mana¹. Doshas are categorized into two main types: Sharirika (comprising Vata, Pitta, and Kapha) and Manasika (including Raja and Tama)². The Dhatus, which form the structural components of the body, consist of seven types: Rasa (plasma), Rakta (blood), Mansa (muscle), Meda (fat), Asthi (bone), Majja (bone marrow), and Sukra (reproductive tissue). Agni represents the digestive power or metabolic health of an individual, while Mala refers to the waste by-products of bodily processes.

Today's stressful lifestyle has led to a global increase in the prevalence of psychosomatic disorders. Individuals affected by these disorders often do not exhibit overt symptoms of psychiatric distress; rather, they attribute their issues to physical medical conditions. Consequently, they frequently seek medical consultations and undergo numerous tests and treatments, often without receiving a definitive diagnosis. This lack of resolution can result in significant frustration and additional distress.

Grahani Roga is a digestive system disorder primarily triggered by the impairment of Agni (digestive capacity). It is also influenced by the malfunctioning of the Dosha involved in the digestive process, Saman Vayu, Pachaka Pitta, and Kledaka Kapha along with the supportive roles of Prana Vata, Apana Vata, and Bodhaka Kapha³.

Review of literature

Grahani is extensively described as a distinct disease in numerous Ayurvedic texts, including the Charaka Samhita, Ashtanga Hridayam and Madhava Nidana. According to Pratyaksha Shariram, Grahani is defined as an organ located at the initial part of the Kshudrantra (small intestine), measuring twelve Angula in length. It is the site where bile from the gallbladder and digestive enzymes from the pancreas mix with partially digested food. Grahani Roga occurs due to the hypo-functioning of this organ, leading to impaired digestion and assimilation.

Grahani, also known as Shashthi Pittdharakala, is located between the Amashaya (stomach) and Pakwashaya (rectum). The strength of Grahani lies in Agni, as it is considered the seat of Agni. Impairment of Agni leads to the dysfunction of Grahani, resulting in the disorder known as Grahani Roga⁴.

The term Grahani, as a disease entity, specifically refers to the conditions Grahani-gada and Grahani Roga, which arise from the malfunctioning of the Grahani⁵. Individuals who eat excessively and disregard dietary guidelines are prone to developing Grahani Roga, as this behavior leads to the morbidity of the Grahani⁶.

Madhava Nidana defines Grahani Roga as follows: "In individuals recently relieved of diarrhea but still experiencing poor digestion, as well as others with impaired digestive capacity, indulgence in unsuitable foods and activities leads to an aggravation of the Dosha. These Dosha affect the Grahani (the seat of Agni), further impairing its digestive functions. The afflicted Grahani, influenced by the Dosha either individually or in combination, results in the expulsion of food that is undigested or partially digested, mixed with foul-smelling feces, sometimes solid and sometimes liquid, and accompanied by abdominal pain. Scholars of Ayurveda refer to this condition as Grahani Roga."⁷

Grahani, the seat of Agni (digestive fire), can be adversely affected by various factors that impair the digestion process⁸. Even wholesome food, when consumed in appropriate quantities, may not be properly digested due to psychological factors such as Chinta (anxiety), Shoka (grief), Bhaya (fear), and Krodha (anger). This clearly indicates the significant impact of the psychic state on the digestive process⁹.

Rajas and Tamas are the two psychic Dosha, which contribute to mental disorders such as Kama (passion), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), Moha (confusion), Irshya (envy), Mana (conceit), Mada (intoxication), Shoka (grief), Chittodvega (excitement), Bhaya (fear), and Harsha (exhilaration). In contrast Vata, Pitta, and Kapha are the somatic Dosha responsible for physical ailments such as Jwara (fever), Atisara (diarrhea), Shopha (swelling), Shosha (emaciation), Shwasa (dyspnea), Prameha (diabetes), and Kustha (skin diseases)¹⁰.

Indeed, the psychic and somatic diseases often coexist and influence each other mutually¹¹. For instance, mental conditions like Kama (passion) can exacerbate physical ailments such as Jwara (fever), creating a synergistic effect on the overall health of an individual. Similarly, other psychological disorders like anger (Krodha), anxiety (Shoka), or fear (Bhaya) can impact somatic conditions such as dyspnea (Shwasa) or skin diseases (Kustha), highlighting the intricate interplay between mind and body in the manifestation and progression of disease.

Modern science indeed recognizes the profound psychosomatic relationship within the digestion process. The enteric nervous system (ENS) and central nervous system (CNS) are pivotal in maintaining gut health, regulating peristalsis, secretions, and extending to encompass endocrine, humoral, metabolic, and immune communication pathways. The autonomic nervous system, hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, and nerves distributed throughout the gastrointestinal (GI) tract establish a bidirectional link between the gut and the brain. This intricate network allows for the brain to exert influence over intestinal activities, including the modulation of functional immune effector cells. Simultaneously, the gut can impact mood, cognition, and overall mental health, underscoring the intricate interplay between the gut and the brain in maintaining holistic well-being.

DISCUSSION

It is widely acknowledged that there exists a dynamic interplay between the Mansika Dosha (mental factors) and Sharirik Dosha (physical factors), wherein disturbances in mental health can exert influence on physical well-being, and vice versa¹².

Charaka, in his teachings, provides numerous instances illustrating how somatic disorders can impact the psychological state of an individual. For instance, he highlights that when Vayu becomes abnormal in the body, it leads to dejection of the mind instead of its usual effects of enlivenment and excitement¹³. Similarly, Marichi elucidates that abnormal Pitta can give rise to

emotions such as fear, anger, excitement, hallucination, exhilaration, and lucidity¹⁴. Additionally, while normal Kapha generates feelings of enlivenment and sloth, excessive Kapha can lead to heightened sloth and hallucination¹⁵. Furthermore, it is observed that an excess of grief and fear affects Vata, anger affects Pitta, and excessive joy affects Kapha¹⁶, demonstrating the intricate connection between physical and mental states according to Ayurvedic principles.

While the direct description of Manasika Bhava (psychological factors) in the context of Grahani Roga (digestive disorders) may not be explicitly outlined in the Nidana (etiology) and symptomatology, references within Ayurvedic texts provide insights into their significance.

For instance, Charaka Samhita highlights that individuals who indulge in food without adhering to the rules and regulations of dietary intake are prone to quickly developing diseases caused by the vitiation of Grahani due to their greedy habits¹⁷. This suggests a link between psychological traits such as greed and the manifestation of digestive disorders.

Moreover, in the symptomatology of Vataja Grahani, the term "Manasah Sadanam" is mentioned by Acharya Charaka¹⁸. While this may not provide a direct description of psychological factors, it implies a connection between mental states and the presentation of Grahani disorders.

These references underscore the importance of considering psychological factors in understanding the etiology and manifestation of Grahani Roga according to Ayurvedic principles.

Absolutely, the Ayurvedic texts, particularly Acharya Charaka in the Vimana Sthana, underscore the significant role of Manasika Bhava (psychological factors) such as Chinta (anxiety), Shoka (grief), Bhaya (fear), and Krodha (anger) in the pathophysiology of Grahani Roga (digestive disorders).

The Grahani, considered as the seat of Agni (digestive fire), plays a crucial role in the digestion process. Any disturbance or vitiation of Agni can lead to the manifestation of Grahani Roga. While Agni works on ingested food for proper digestion, the influence of Manasika Bhava affects this process. Psychological factors like anxiety, grief, fear, and anger can disrupt the functioning of Agni and thereby impact digestion.

This understanding highlights the intricate interplay between mental states and physiological processes in the development and progression of digestive disorders. It emphasizes the holistic approach of Ayurveda in considering not only physical factors but also psychological aspects in the management of health and disease¹⁹.

Grahani Roga shares symptoms with GI disorders like IBS, IBD, and malabsorption syndromes, often exacerbated by stress.

Numerous factors biological, psychological, and social contribute to the onset of functional gastrointestinal disorders. The intricate relationship between environmental or psychological stress and gastrointestinal distress is bidirectional and intricate: stress can initiate and exacerbate gastrointestinal symptoms, and conversely, symptoms can intensify stress.

The enteric nervous system, often dubbed the "second brain," mirrors the central nervous system in its utilization of similar neurons and neurotransmitters. Upon detecting food in the gut, neurons along the digestive tract prompt muscle cells to initiate contractions, facilitating food movement and breakdown.

Concurrently, neurotransmitters like serotonin enable communication between the enteric and central nervous systems.

This "brain-gut axis" underscores the significance of investigating how psychological or social stressors may precipitate digestive issues. For instance, during heightened stress triggering the fight-or-flight response, digestion may halt to allocate internal resources towards confronting perceived threats. Even milder stressors, like public speaking, can disrupt digestion, manifesting as symptoms of functional gastrointestinal disorders such as abdominal pain. Conversely, persistent gastrointestinal issues can exacerbate anxiety and stress levels.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it is evident that Manasika Bhava (psychological factors) significantly influences an individual's health. Negative psychological states such as anxiety, grief, fear and anger can impact the physiology of digestion, disrupting homeostasis and contributing to Grahani Roga (digestive disorders). Consequently, psychological therapies are frequently integrated with other treatments or utilized independently to manage Grahani Roga effectively.

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