

Importance Of Grahani and Its Physiological Aspects

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ABSTRACT

Almost in all *Ayurvedic* classics, the organ *Grahani* is described as an organ of digestion. These descriptions of various *Acharyas* are based on different criterions. Some *Acharyas* defined *Grahani* considering its functional aspects, while few others considered anatomical peculiarities. According to *Acharya Charaka*, *Grahani* is the seat (*Adhithana*) of *Agni* and is located above *Nabhi* (umbilical region). It is supported and nourished by the strength of *Agni*. Normally, it receives the ingested food, which is retained by it by restraining the downward movement (*Grahanati*). After digestion it releases the food through sides of lumen to next *Ashaya* i.e., *Pakwashaya*. According to *Acharya Susruta*, the sixth *Kala* described as *Pitta Dhara Kala* is situated between *Amashaya* and *Pakwashaya*, and it is stated to be *Grahani*. In *Astanga Hridaya*, it is quoted that *Grahani* is the organ of *Mahasrotasa*, which is a seat of *Agni* (i.e., *Pachaka Pitta*) and it receives and retains food.

Keywords: *Grahani*, *Pitta*, *Agni*, *Jathragni*, Intestine, duodenum, *Amashaya*, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is being chiefly a medical science laid emphasis on proper understanding of the *Sarira* (body) as very evident from the statements- “The knowledge of anatomy and physiology is essential for the benefit of the body as this knowledge gives insight for the treatment and hence expert highly recommends the anatomical and physiological understanding of the body.”^{1,2}

Acharya Charaka considered *Grahani* to be above *Nabhi*³ and to be present on left side while *Acharya Sushruta* and other *Acharyas* had elaborately describe the position of *Grahani* in comparison to *Acharya Charaka* and considered that it is situated between *Amasaya* and *Pakvasaya* and regarded it as *Pittadhara Kala*⁴. As *Acharya Sushruta* and other *Acharyas* had illustrated that *Grahani* is situated between *Amasaya* and *Pakvasaya*, thus in order to get the exact position of *Grahani*, location of *Amasaya* and *Pakvasaya* must be established. The term *Amasaya* and *Pakvasaya* are mentioned by all *Acharyas* in *Kostha* or as *Kosthangas*. *Kosthang* as may differ when their anatomical and physiological aspect are considered and it can be seen even in present era as the “gastrointestinal tract” is more of anatomical term while “digestive tract” is indicative of physiological aspect of the alimentary tract.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

To understand anatomy and physiology of *Grahani*

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Koshtha is a cavity formed from *Avarana* (wall) which is consisting of *Dhatus* (solid structure). *Koshtha* is known as *Mahastrotasa* (the great channel) which is from mouth to the anus i.e. complete digestive system and as *Abhyantara Roga Marga* (internal pathway of diseases). *Charaka* states that *Koshtha* is the cavity containing fifteen organs - umbilicus, heart, pancreas, liver, spleen, kidneys, bladder, lungs, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, rectum, anus, *Pakwashaya* (large intestine including pelvic colon), *Purishadhara* (the cecum). *Sushruta* states that *Koshtha* is a cavity containing heart, lungs, stomach, intestine, rectum, pancreas and urinary bladder.⁵

Here it appears that there is difference between the view of *Acharyas* regarding the role of *Amasaya* in digestion but it is not so as *Acharya Chakrapani* had clarified the doubt by dividing the *Amasaya* in two parts *Urdhva-Amasaya* and *Adho-Amasaya*, among these *Urdhva-Amasaya* was considered as site for *Kapha Dosa* and *Adho-Amasaya* for *Pitta Dosa*. Thus, *Urdhva-Amasaya* of *Charaka* corresponds to the *Amasaya* of *Sushruta* and other *Acharyas*. While *Adho-Amasaya* corresponds to *Grahani*, where whole digestion and absorption of all essential nutrient occur. Thus, *Amasaya* can rationally correlate with stomach.

All *Acharya* has regarded *Grahani* as the seat of *Agni* whose chief function is to receive the food coming from *Amasaya* and hold it for proper digestion and after absorption of nutrients the digested food is propelled forwards to *Pakvasaya*. The *Agni* or *Pachaka Pitta* is responsible for digestion of food as per all *Acharya*. The gastric gland produces the gastric juice which contains enzymes that plays important role in digestion of food and after this, complete digestion and absorption of food occur in between *Amasaya* and *Pakvasaya Madhya* i.e., in *Grahani*. While *Acharya Charaka* had emphasized on the concept *Agni* though the functions of *Agni* i.e., *Ayu*, *Bala*, *Varna*, *Swasthya* (health), *Utasaha*, *Sharira upchaya-apachaya* (body catabolism and anabolism) *Oja*, *Teja*, *Dhatvagni* and *bhutagni* along with *Prana* depends upon *Jathragni*. Even this *Jathragni* subsides death of the person occurs means in the Sama state of *Agni* the body is healthy while in its disturbance leads to origin of various diseases into body.⁶ As already discussed, that *Pachaka Pitta* and *Jathragni* are same entity while *Accha Pitta* is *Pitta* which is secreted when partially digested food moves from stomach towards *Pitta Sthana*, as seen recorded in *Charaka Samhita* that, “thereafter, as the partly digested food which has attained *Amla Bhava* is moved down, *Accha Pitta* is secreted”.⁷ According to *Acharya Chakrapani*, *Agni* is situated into *Grahani* and when the doshas gets resides into *Grahani* known as *Grahani Dosha*. Diseases like *Agnimandhya*, *Ajeerna*, etc. arises due to *doshas* resides into *Grahani*.^{8,9}

DISCUSSION

Modern interpreters have viewed *Grahani* from the angle of different regional parts of gastrointestinal tract including the associated glands and can be summarized as Dr. Ghanekara, Dr. D.S. Gauda, Dr. Hari Prapanna Sharma, Dr.D.N. Banarji accepted the mucous membrane of entire small intestine as *Grahani*. Dr. Gananatha Sen regarded the proximal twelve finger portion of *Ksudrantra* (small intestine) as *Grahani*. Dr.V.S.Variyara concluded that pyloric valve can be considered as *Grahani*. Dr. Guru etal. preferred *Grahani* up to the large intestine as the process of absorption continues up to level of large intestine. Dr.R.K.Gupta etal. also considered *Grahani* to be entire small bowel & colon. The description of anatomical structure of *Grahani* available by now is been far from a universal acceptance.

Anatomically, *Grahani* is the organ situated between *Amashaya* and *Pakvashaya* while physiologically it is the seat of *Pittadhara kala*. *Grahani* is having the function of *grahana*, *dharana*, *pachana*, *munchana*.

Grahani has been considered in one among the *Astamahagadas*, which suggest that it is difficult to diagnose and difficult to treat also. In ayurveda much importance has given to functional aspect than structural aspect but *Grahani* is one of the diseases, where structural as well as functional aspect is also considered. *Grahani dosha* can be considered as syndrome with alteration in stool either solid or liquid form, containing both *ama* and *pakva* food products. Malabsorption constitutes the pathological interference with the normal physiological sequence of digestion (intraluminal process), absorption (mucosal process) and transport (post-mucosal events) of nutrients. Intestinal malabsorption can be due to: Mucosal damage (enteropathy), Congenital or acquired reduction in absorptive surface, Defects of specific hydrolysis, Defects of ion transport, pancreatic insufficiency, impaired entero-hepatic circulation.

CONCLUSION

Grahani takes food firstly stored in the *Amashaya*. It is situated above the *Pakwashaya*. *Grahani* is a type of *Kala* situated between the *Amashaya* and *Pakwashaya*. *Grahani Kala* is the seat of *Antaragni* which secretes digestive juice to digest four types of food coming from *Amashaya* and also helps in absorption of digested food. when there is disturbance in the *Grahani*, then secretion of digestive juice is no properly occur, results in digestion of food and formation of *Aam*. This *Aam* produces *Grahani* disease. The symptom of *Grahani* disease is digested and indigested passing of fecal matter. The main strength of *Grahani* is *Antaragni* or *Pitta* which is situated in it. If *Agni* is decreases then disorders of food digestion occurs. Chief function of *Grahani* is digestion of food and absorption of digested food material.

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