



## The Significance of Diet and Lifestyle Modification in *Grahani Roga* Management

**Dr. Abhishek Khatri<sup>1</sup>, Prof. Nisha Gupta<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Yogendra Nath Sharma<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Ketan Sharma<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>M.D. (FinalYear). PG Dept. of Samhita & Maulik Siddhanta, NIA (De Novo) Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

<sup>2</sup> Professor and HOD Department of Samhita & Maulik Siddhanta, NIA (De Novo) Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

<sup>3,4</sup>M.D. (FinalYear). PG Dept. of Samhita & Maulik Siddhanta, NIA (De Novo) Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

### ABSTRACT

In the contemporary era marked by a surge in fast food and unhealthy dietary practices, coupled with a sedentary lifestyle, inadequate exercise, late-night sleep, and heightened stress levels, both physical and mental health are profoundly affected, disrupting the digestive system and leading to a myriad of ailments. Junk and fast food are major culprits, causing an accumulation of toxic substances known as "aam," recognized as a root cause of many diseases. Ayurveda places significant emphasis on maintaining an optimal dietary regimen tailored to individual constitutions, seasons, digestive fire (*agni*), and nature (*prakriti*).

The gastrointestinal disorder, *Grahani*, occupies a prominent position among the eight major diseases affecting the digestive system. Various factors contribute to the onset of *Grahani Roga*, wherein the digestive fire (*Pachakagni*) and coordinating air (*Saamvayu*) are impaired. The dietary approach for *Grahani* focuses on enhancing digestive fire (*Agni*) and reducing toxic accumulation (*Aam*) through specific food substances characterized by astringent (*Kashaya*), sweet (*Madhura*), and pungent (*Katu*) tastes, as well as light (*Laghu*), dry (*Ruksha*), absorbent (*Grahi*), stimulating digestive fire (*Deepana*), and aiding digestion (*Deepana*) qualities. These foods possess warm (*Ushna*) potency and result in either a pungent or sweet aftertaste (*Katu* or *Madhura Vipaka*). This dietary regimen supports efficient digestion of appropriately chosen and timed food, aiding in the management and treatment of *Grahani Roga*, also known as Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

**Key Words:** *Agni*, *Aam*, *Grahani*, IBS, Diet

### Introduction-

In the age of rapid economic growth and urbanization, dietary patterns and meal timings have shifted due to increasingly sedentary lifestyles. The alteration in both diet and lifestyle, coupled with elevated stress levels, insufficient sleep, and a departure from *Sadvritta* (righteous living), stands as primary reasons for *Grahani Roga* (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) and various other ailments. These factors disrupt the digestive system, leading to a multitude of health issues.<sup>1</sup>

*Grahani Roga*, affecting digestion and metabolism, is categorized as one of the *Maharogas*, posing challenges in diagnosis and treatment due to its involvement in complex metabolic pathways. The *Grahani*, (digestive fire), earns its name from its ability to retain and thoroughly digest food, preventing its premature downward movement in an undigested state. *Grahani Roga* signifies a malfunctioning of *Agni*.<sup>2</sup>

*Grahani* is often described as the seat of *Agni* by many revered *Acharyas*. According to *Acharya Charaka*, *Jatharagni*, the chief digestive fire, holds a central role, influencing *Bhutagni* (elemental metabolism) and *Dhatvagni* (tissue metabolism). Maintenance of *Jatharagni* is vital, as the overall vitality and health of an individual are contingent upon it. The six tastes (*Rasas*) of foods—*Kashaya* (astringent), *Madhura* (sweet), *Amla* (sour), *Lavana* (salty), *Katu* (pungent), and *Tikta* (bitter)—transform into three types of *Rasas* (*Madhura*, *Amla*, and *Katu*) suitable for metabolic processes through the action of *Jatharagni*. Extinction of this *Agni* leads to mortality, emphasizing the critical role it plays in sustaining life. Maintaining a balanced *Jatharagni* ensures longevity and good health.<sup>3</sup>

Pathologically, diseases initiate due to improper food digestion, further vitiating *Agni* and *Doshas*, resulting in the formation of *aam* (toxins). Functionally weak *Agni*, known as *Mandagni*, is the fundamental cause of *Aamdosha* and a key factor in the manifestation of numerous diseases.<sup>4</sup>

### Aim of Diet: -

The sustenance of life for all living beings primarily relies on their diet. Maintaining a disease-free state in individuals is achievable through a suitable and balanced diet.<sup>5</sup> Whether in a state of health or disease, the quality of the diet is paramount, as without proper nourishment, the effectiveness of any medicinal treatment is diminished.

For an individual grappling with *Grahani*, the dietary objectives are as follows:

1. Enhancing *Agni*, the digestive fire, to optimize *Grahani*'s functionality.
2. Reducing the accumulation of toxic *aam* through the use of digestive stimulants (*Deepana*), digestive aids (*Deepana*), and light (*Laghu*) substances.
3. Normalizing bowel habits in terms of volume and consistency to align with the individual's *Prakriti* (normal constitution).
4. Augmenting overall nutrition to improve the individual's well-being.

### Properties of Ahara Dravyas (food items) for *Grahani*:-

- *Deepana* and *Deepana* Dravyas
- *Laghu* and *Grahi* Dravyas.
- Diet which mitigates *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*.
- Mainly *Kashaya* (astringent), *Madhura* (sweet) and *Katu* (pungent) in taste.
- Typically, *Grahani Roga nashaka* dravyas.

These dietary guidelines based on Ayurvedic principles can help in managing *Grahani roga* effectively, promoting digestive health and overall well-being.

Based on the mentioned qualities of foods in Ayurveda, let's categorize suitable (*pathya*) and unsuitable (*apathya*) dietary items for managing *Grahani Roga* (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) into various Ayurvedic food groups:<sup>6</sup>

1. *Shookadhanya varga*
2. *Shamidhanya varga*
3. *Mamsa varga*
4. *Shaka varga*
5. *Phala varga*
6. *Harita varga*
7. *Madya varga*
8. *Gorasa varga*
9. *Kritanna varga*
10. *Aharayogi varga*

A detailed description of the dravyas which can be used in *Grahani* has been mentioned in Table no. 1.

**Table 1 - Pathya apathya in *Grahani***

<i>Varga</i>	<i>Pathya</i>	<i>Apathya</i>
<i>Shookdhanya</i>	<i>Shastika shaali, purana shaali</i>	<i>Godhuma</i> (wheat), <i>Yava</i> (barley)
<i>Shamidhanya</i>	<i>Masoora</i> (lentil), <i>tuvari</i> (red gram), <i>aadhaki</i> (pigeon peas), <i>mudga</i> (green gram), <i>kulattha</i> (horse gram)	<i>Nishpava</i> (flat beans), <i>Kaalaya</i> (green peas), <i>Masha</i> (black gram),
<i>Mamsa</i>	<i>Kravyada</i> (meat of meat-eating animals), <i>lava</i> (bustard quail), <i>shasha</i> (Indian hare), <i>ena</i> (black deer), <i>tittiri</i> (partridge), types of fish	
<i>Shaka</i>	<i>Changeri</i> (creeping woodsorrel)	<i>Kakaamchi</i> ( black nightshade), <i>Upodika</i> (spinach), <i>Vastuka</i> (wild spinach), <i>Kushmanda</i> (ash guard) and all leafy vegetables
<i>Phala</i>	<i>Daadima</i> (pomegranate), <i>Rambha phala</i> (banana), <i>bilva</i> (bengal quince), <i>shrungataka</i> (water caltrops), <i>kapitta</i> (wood apple), <i>jambu</i> (jamun fruit)	<i>Draksha</i> (grapes), <i>Badara</i> (indian jujube), <i>Poogaphala</i> (arecanut), <i>Narikela</i>
<i>Harita</i>	<i>Dhanyaka</i> (coriander seeds), <i>mahaa nimba</i> (variety of neem)	<i>Shigru</i> (drumstick), <i>Ardraka</i> (ginger), <i>Lashuna</i>

<i>Madhya</i>	<i>Sura, aranala</i>	<i>Dhanyamla, Sauveera, Tushodaka</i>
<i>Goras</i>	<i>Dadhi(curd), paya(milk), grita(ghee), takra (buttermilk)</i>	<i>Mastu (supernatant water of curd/whey)</i>
<i>Krittana</i>	<i>Laja manda</i>	<i>Gurvannapaana (anna which is heavy for digestion), all types of poopa(fried food), Rasala(fruit juices)</i>
<i>Aharayogi</i>	<i>Tila taila(sesame oil), jeeraka(cumin seeds)</i>	<i>Kshara(alkalis)</i>

Ayurveda has mentioned diet according to the *Dosha* predominance in *Grahani* as –

**Vataj** – *Peya* (thin gruel) prepared from decoction of *Panchakola*.<sup>7</sup> *Yusha* (soup) of *Panchakola*, *Moolaka* with *Marich* (black pepper) and *Ghee*, *Yusha* of meat of birds and animals inhabiting arid and prepared by sizzling with *ghee*, or *Yusha* of meat of *Kravyada* (meat eating) types of birds and animals, by adding *Dadima* and butter milk, *Aranala* (a sour drink), *Arishtha* (a type of alcoholic drink) as drinks<sup>8</sup>, *Yusha* of *Shigru* (drum stick) prepared with butter milk.<sup>9</sup>

**Pittaj** – *Jangal Mamsa* (meat of animals of arid zone). *Yusha* of *Mudga*, *Khada* (a sour drink), added with *Dadima* and *ghee*.<sup>10</sup>

**Kaphaj** – *Yusha* of dried *Moolaka* or *Kullatha*<sup>11</sup> *Yusha* of *Chitrak* (*Plumbago zeylanica*) and *Moolaka*.<sup>12</sup> *Peya* of *Ativisha* (*Aconitum heterophyllum*) with *Shunthi* made sour.<sup>13</sup>

### Importance of *takra* prayoga in *Grahani*.<sup>14</sup>

- The utilization of *Takra* (buttermilk) in treating *Grahani* (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) holds a significant place in Ayurveda. *Takra* is known for its *Deepana* (stimulating digestion) properties and being *Laghu* (light) to digest, aiding in the correction of *agni* (digestive fire).
- Despite its *Kashaya* (astringent) and *ruksha* (dry) qualities, which could potentially aggravate *vata*, *Takra*'s *Madhura* (sweet), *amla* (sour), and *sandra* (heaviness) qualities help pacify *vata*, thus managing *vataja Grahani*.
- Moreover, the *amla* rasa (sour taste) of *Takra* might suggest pitta aggravation, but its *Madhura vipaka* (sweet post-digestive effect) helps alleviate *pitta*, aiding in the management of *pittaja Grahani*.
- Although *Takra* possesses *abhishtyandi guna* (qualities promoting excess secretions), indicating a possibility of *kapha* aggravation, its *Kashaya rasa* (astringent taste), *ushna* (warm), and *vikaasi* (expansive) *guna* assist in managing *kaphaja Grahani*.

### Procedure for the usage of *takra* in *Grahani*:

After assessing the individual's strength (*bala*) and time (*kala*), one may proceed with the administration of *takra* (buttermilk) to patients with *Grahani*. The choice of *takra* type is based on the prevalent *dosha*. The *takra* given in *Grahani* treatment should be freshly prepared and it should not cause *vidaaha*.<sup>15</sup>

The *takra prayoga* should be done either for 7 days, 10 days, 15 days or 1 month based on the *roga* and *rogi bala*. The application of *Takra* (buttermilk) treatment should be determined based on the condition and strength of the individual (*rogi bala*) and the nature of the ailment (*roga*). For a person with significantly weakened digestive power, *Takra* is advised as a sole therapy during the treatment. Alternatively, one may consume *Laja Sattu* mixed with *Takra* in the form of *Avaleha*. After the digestion of *Takra Avaleha*, *Takra* *Peya* mixed with salt can be taken. Additionally, *Yusha* (soup) or *Mamsarasa* (meat essence) prepared using *Takra* can be administered.

Considering the weakened digestive capacity in *Grahani* disorder, the initiation and cessation of *Takra* treatment should be gradual. One should not abruptly begin or stop *Takra* consumption. It is recommended to commence with a small quantity, gradually reducing the intake of regular food until reaching a level where only *Takra* is consumed (*Takra prayoga* without *anna*). Similarly, when concluding the *Takra* regimen, the reduction of *Takra* dosage should be gradual, transitioning back to a normal diet, and discontinuing *Takra* intake in a phased manner.<sup>16</sup>

### -LIFE STYLE MODIFICATION IN GRAHANI

Lifestyle modifications and adhering to a balanced diet regimen, while considering *Pathya Apathya* (appropriate and inappropriate), are crucial in the management and cure of *Grahani*.

#### Dietary Adjustments:

1. Shifting towards a nourishing diet cultivates strong *Agni* (digestive fire) and guards against *Grahani*.
2. Consuming meals at regular intervals is advised.
3. Eliminate junk foods, allergens, and hard-to-digest food items from the diet.
4. Ayurveda prescribes a well-balanced diet based on *Sansarjana Krama*, aligning with an individual's *Prakriti* (constitution). Those with *Grahani* are encouraged to follow this dietary approach.

5. Avoid inappropriate meal timings such as skipping meals, eating indigestible food, excessive consumption, incompatible food combinations, irregular eating habits, and overeating.
6. Refrain from preparing or consuming unhygienic food items.
7. Embrace a diet rich in balanced nutritional content to support overall well-being.
8. Abstain from *Virudha-ahara* (incompatible food combinations); instead, tailor the diet according to one's internal constitution, considering *Desha* (region) and *Kala* (time).

By incorporating these modifications into daily life and adhering to a suitable dietary routine, individuals can effectively manage and alleviate the symptoms of *Grahani*, promoting a healthier digestive system.

**The dietary recommendations for managing *Grahani Roga* are outlined as follows:**

1. Incorporate nourishing foods that enhance digestive enzymes, restore balanced gut flora, and ensure adequate nutrition. This includes foods rich in fiber, fruits, vegetables, grains, and curd.
2. Include *Yavagu* (rice gruel) and *Panchkola* soup in your diet.
3. Consume *Takrarista* and *Jangalmansa* to support digestive health.
4. Integrate vegetable soups into your meal plan.
5. Opt for a light diet and consider incorporating soup made from dried radish.

**Behavior Modification:**

1. Behavioral aspects such as fear, grief, stress, and insomnia can manifest *Grahani* symptoms. Hence, it is advisable to steer clear of stress, fear, and grief to prevent the onset of depression, which can adversely affect *Agni* (digestive fire).
2. Maintaining a positive and enthusiastic outlook is essential to sustain normal metabolic functions.
3. Excessive contemplation or '*Chintan*' habits should be avoided, as they can impede the digestion process. Prolonged mental activity directs blood flow primarily to the brain rather than the intestines.
4. Cultivate a positive mindset regarding the food about to be consumed, believing it will yield beneficial effects.
5. Foster happiness and engage in activities that enhance mental empowerment.
6. Adhere to the principles of '*Swasthwarita*' while consuming a diet, ensuring maximum beneficial effects of the ingested food.<sup>17-19</sup>

**Modifying the Daily Routine for Improved Health:**

1. Avoid an undisciplined lifestyle to maintain balance.
2. Steer clear of daytime sleeping and staying awake late into the night.
3. Adhere to a structured daily routine with fixed timings for all activities, including exercise, breakfast, meals, and sleep.
4. Engage in regular exercises to fortify the body and kindle the digestive fire (*Agni*).
5. Practice meditation to alleviate stress and attain a sense of calm.
6. Incorporate *Yoga* and *Pranayam* for enhancing stress resistance and overall well-being.
7. Follow defined Ayurvedic regimens like *Ritucharya* (seasonal routine) and *Dinacharya* (daily routine) for optimal results.
8. Integrate *Dhyan* (meditation) and *Shodhna* (purification procedures) at specific intervals to derive benefits for *Grahani* (Irritable Bowel Syndrome).<sup>17-20</sup>

**Role of Asana in *Grahani***

1. *Bhujangasana* (Cobra Pose): *Bhujangasana* generates warmth within the body, aiding in the enhancement of digestion.
2. *Mayurasana* (Peacock Pose): *Mayurasana* facilitates the elimination of undigested matter from the stomach.
3. *Paschimottanasana* (Seated Forward Bend): *Paschimottanasana* amplifies the digestive fire (gastric fire).
4. *Matsyendrasana* (Lord of the Fish Pose): *Matsyendrasana* stimulates the digestive fire (*Jatharagni*).
5. *Sarvangasana* (Shoulder Stand): *Sarvangasana* mitigates *Kapha* and *Pitta* imbalances while also providing relief from indigestion.

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## DISCUSSION

*Grahani*, known as the site of *Agni*, possesses the ability to retain undigested food and delay its downward movement until complete digestion. When *Agni* is functionally weak, termed as *Mandagni*, food is inadequately digested, resulting in the formation of toxic substances (*Aamdosha*), a crucial factor in the development of *Grahani Roga*. The present-day lifestyle, characterized by shifting routines and mental stress, significantly increases susceptibility to lifestyle disorders, including *Grahani Roga*. Dietary adjustments aid in correcting *Agni*, while lifestyle modifications such as *yoga* and *pranayam* help reduce stress levels, consequently improving food intake and digestion.

Ayurveda emphasizes the role of psychological factors in causing disturbances in *Manovaha Sroto*, ultimately affecting both the mind and body, manifesting as *Manashika* and *Shareerika Vyadhi*. Almost all diseases exhibit an intricate connection between the physical and mental aspects. In this context, we've compiled the significance of diet in the onset of *Grahani*. Given the diminished *Agni* in *Grahani*, we've identified specific food substances with qualities like digestive stimulation (*Deepana*), aiding digestion (*Deepana*), lightness (*Laghu*), absorbency (*grahi*), and tastes such as sweet (*madhura*), astringent (*Kashaya*), and pungent (*Katu*) based on different categories. Detailed descriptions of food preparations using these substances have been provided.

*Takra* (buttermilk) holds particular importance in managing *Grahani*, and we've elaborated on its types, dosage, and duration of consumption. Lifestyle adjustments are equally pivotal in *Grahani* management. Thus, for a psycho-somatic ailment like *Grahani*, a comprehensive approach involving dietary and lifestyle modifications alongside appropriate medications is crucial. This approach aids in alleviating signs and symptoms, striving to restore balance in *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, and *Agni*, as elucidated in Ayurvedic texts.

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## CONCLUSION

*Grahani Roga*, as elucidated earlier, manifests as a persistent ailment affecting the *Annavaha srotas*, primarily linked to *Agni* (digestive fire) and lifestyle patterns. Ayurveda identifies *Grahani* as a *Tridoshatmaka* disease, where disruptions in the digestive fire—*Jatharagni*, *Samana Vayu*, *Pachak Pitta*, and *Kledaka Kapha*—play a pivotal role. Hence, embracing a health-conscious lifestyle, maintaining consistent dietary practices, and engaging in *Yoga* and *Pranayam*, aligning with ayurvedic principles, can exert superior control over the condition's signs and symptoms compared to relying solely on medicinal intervention.

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