

## **GRAHANI ROGA:** **CHRONIC MALABSORPTION SYNDROME**

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### Cosmology

Ayurveda is the world's oldest sustainable health care system, dating from over 10, 000 years of known oral history and at least 5,000 years of written history. Ayurveda brings a tradition of healthy living based in keen observation of natural sciences, the sum total of which are considered to be specialized expressions of the *hu* (light) – *man* (one, original) experience of existence.

Ayurveda is inclusive of all philosophical schools of thought and all healing practices. The *Charak Samhita*, a principle medical scripture of Ayurveda, begins by announcing, "This is the treatise on longevity". It unfolds a cosmology of individual spiritual destiny (dharma) or righteousness and individual choice (karma) or preference.

The individual is deemed to be indivisible from the whole of natural experience. *Prakruti* (nature, progenitor) derives from *Purusha* (formless, nameless). Form is continuously generating a multiplicity of creation, which can be both qualified and quantified.

These ten pairs of opposite attributes are said to qualify all experience and matter:

Heavy	Light
Hot	Cold
Oily, liquid	Dry
Cloudy	Clear
Smooth	Rough
Penetrating	Dispersing
Subtle	Gross
Mobile	Static
Sharp	Dull
Soft	Hard, dense

### The Physical Body

The human body is said to be a vehicle for spiritual experience whose form and function is generated according to individual choice or desire (*Prakruti*). It is made up of the '*panchamahabhutas*' or five great constructing elements of creation: ether (space – atomic energy), air (movement – electrical energy), fire (transformation – radiant energy), water (fluidity – chemical energy) and earth (crystallization – mechanical energy).

These five elements are said to relate in different combinations and permutations to form the myriad substances of the universe. *Prana*, the life force, enlivens the creation with the pure intelligence of order or disorder, the breath of life itself. Ayurveda is called the science of self-healing because each individual and each cell is considered to be inherently an essential expression of pure intelligence.

The human body is comprised of seven tissue types: plasma, blood, muscle (viscera), adipose, bone, nerve (C.N.S., endocrines, marrow, fascia) and reproductive tissue. These are informed by the habitual food choices and mental/emotional choices, which irrigate the tissues with doshic-specific qualitative influence, whether from Vata (ether, air), Pitta (fire, water) and/or Kapha (water, earth).

### The 'Small' Intestine

The small intestine (*grahani*, or 'that which holds') is a long organ about six times in length as you are tall. If you are 6 feet tall, your *grahani* is about 36 feet long. It is comprised of three main layers: mucosal, muscular and serosal.

The innermost layer is a complex, dynamic site of identification of food chemistry (six tastes). It is rich in villi, hair-like structures that guide the food particles to the deeper layers. The muscular layer acts through the peristalsis of contracting and relaxing. For this reason, *grahani* is classified in Ayurveda mostly as *mamsa* dhatu (muscle tissue). The innermost serosal layer interfaces with the general circulation to perform subtle assimilation of nutrients.

### Diseases of Pitta Dosha

When there is qualitative and later quantitative accumulation of the dosha in its site (Vata: colon, Pitta: sm. Intestine, Kapha: lungs), there can be aberrations of acid/alkaline balance, leading to Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Ulcerative Colitis or Leaky Gut syndrome. The exact individual doshic interplay must be determined, preferably by classical pulse assessment, in order to retract the pathogenesis. Ama (toxins or undigested food particles) can accumulate and are classified by their qualitative characteristics. For example, Pitta ama in excess can corrode and erode the mucosal layer.

### General Management

The pitta-pacifying food choices are the first line of management for sufferers of chronic indigestion or malabsorption. Specific herbs can be used depending on the severity of the damage, to help restore the layers one by one. The first to be addressed are the most recently generated

mucosal cells. Depending on the participation of Vata and/or Kapha dosha, the entire individual program is co-created with the sufferer.

### Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Ulcerative Colitis

The inflammatory reaction within the small and large intestine means that absorption is mainly of acidic particles into the bloodstream, causing weakness in the subsequent tissue formations. The recovery time depends upon how long the sufferer has been searching for right guidance, If suppressant drugs have been used, first the side-effects and complications of these substances must be removed. Then the body has a chance to re-build the mucosal lining, returning it to optimal PH levels.

The three main sections of the small intestine, duodenum, jejunum and ileum, can produce different complications because they are specialized for assimilating bitter, pungent and astringent tastes in that order. Mineral assimilation from the colon is particularly impaired in ulcerative colitis, therefore re-building bone, nerve and hormonal sites takes time and careful management.

### Crohn's Disease

In Crohn's disease, the sufferer cannot digest gluten, therefore Kapha type of toxins can accumulate to the point of obscuring the assimilation process. In this case, the individual must also follow Kapha pacifying food choices, strictly avoiding dairy, wheat and gluten. It is critical to learn food preparation science in order to reverse and heal this condition. Eating by 7pm and taking nothing before sleep is also critical, because foods taken later in the evening will assimilate much slower, leaving plenty of undigested food particles to clog the G.I. tract.

### Leaky Gut Syndrome

In chronic malabsorption, Vata dosha can create excess space in the assimilation process, leading to digestive weakness, reflecting a need to avoid dry, cold foods. Rebuilding the gastro-intestinal tract involves retraining food and lifestyle choices to reflect regular meals comprised of all six tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent and astringent).

### Gall Stones

Stones are heavy formations, indicating Kapha dosha. They may be greenish in color, showing pitta dosha. The individual is advised to follow pitta and kapha pacifying food choices and when feasible in the healing process, flush them out with oil and lime juice. Herbal supplementation will be most helpful in breaking down the stones prior to flushing, which should be done under professional supervision, to help support right timing and right outcomes.

### Conclusion

Although Grahani Roga is primarily a pitta disorder, one must take into account the metabolic power and intelligence (*Agni*) of both Vata and Kapha doshas. Additionally, the mind/body relationship is to be retrained in sound lifestyle choices such as food combining and timing of eating. Ayurveda has provided the legacy of understanding all self-healing, regardless of the clinical names or modern methods.

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