

REVIEW OF GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT IN THE LIGHT OF ANNAVAHA SROTAS

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has its holistic approach in understanding the living body or 'Sharir' by different theories or the concepts like *Srotas*. *Srotas* is a structural & functional unit of body through which substance flow from one part to another & nourishes it. It is responsible for carrying the *Dhatus* which are undergoing transformation. Though conceptually *Srotas* are innumerable, but some Acharyas have explained them to be numerable in number like *Pranvaha*, *Udakvaha*, *Raktvaha*, *Mansvaha* etc. In this row, *Annavaha Srotas* is one of the most important and functional *Srotas* of living being described in all important *Samhitas*. It is the largest *Srotas* or channel & can be correlated with gastrointestinal tract or digestive tract. Since it carries 'Anna' it is called as *Annavaha Srotas*. According to *Acharaya Charak*, *Annavaha Srotas* contain *Amashaya* and *Vamaparshwa*. *Amashaya* refers to Oesophagus (food pipe), stomach & most part of small intestine because these structures carry food which is undigested or partly digested.

KEYWORDS: *Srotas*, *Annavaha Srotas*, *Amashaya* & *Vamprashava*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a traditional system of medicine, more than 5000 years old. The living body is the resultant of cluster of innumerable structures called as 'Srotas'. According to various *Acharyas*, *Srotas* are the channels responsible for the nourishment of the body. *Srotas* are the modifications of the *PanchaMahābhūtas* especially *Akash Mahābhūta*. *Srotas* is a structural & functional unit of body through which *Dhatus* flow. *Srotas* is used as a generic term

indicating all the macro and micro channels and pathways in a living organism. It is through these channels, the nutrients and other substances are transported in and out of our systems. The term *Srotas* means Secreting, flowing, moving, oozing etc. These are very subtle in shape, so cannot be easily seen with naked eyes. *Srotas* have their own *Moolsthanas*. *Moolsthanas* are the root of origin. “*Mulamiti Prabhav Sthanam*”, where *Moola* is known as root or base or place of origin or start. “*Prabhav Sthanam*” refers to the area of influence. These *Moolsthanas* can be compared with the roots of the tree. Any damage to the roots leads to the perishing of the plant, similarly damage to these *Moolsthanas* can affect the physiology of body adversely. Proper coordination and functioning of every *Srotas* is very important for maintenance of Homeostasis.

Literary Review

Though conceptually *srotas* are innumerable, but some *Acharyas* like *Acharaya Charak* & *Acharaya Sushrut* have assumed them to be 13 and 11 in number respectively, like *Pranvaha*, *Udakvaha*, *Raktvaha*, *Mansvaha* etc. *Srotas* are the hollow channels, except *Sira* and *Dhamni*, which originates from root space, spreads in the body & carries respective *Dhatus* undergoing transformation.

Annavaha Srotas

Annavaha Srotas can be correlated with the alimentary tract or gastrointestinal tract or digestive tract. *Annavaha Srotas* are those channels in the body which transport the food and liquids in the Gastrointestinal Tract. The *Srotas* or channels which carry ‘*Anna*’ or food from mouth to the intestines are referred to as *Annavaha Srotas*. (*Anna*=Food, *Vaha*=Carry, *Srotas*=Channels).

According to *Acharaya Sushrut*

The *moolsthanas* of *Annavaha Srotas* are two in number. They are *Amashaya* and *Annavahini Dhamanis* (the channels which carry food).

When *Annavaha Srotas* gets vitiated, it leads to.

1. *Chardi* – Vomiting
2. *Pipasa* – Thirst
3. *Shula* – Pain which is of Pricking type.
4. *Maranam* – Death

According to Acharaya Charak

Acharaya Charak has explained 13 *srotas* and *Annavaha Srotas* is one of them. *Annavaha Srotas* has its roots in *Amashaya* (stomach) and *Vamaparshwa* (left lateral side of abdomen). *Amashaya* refers stomach & most part of small intestine because these structures carry food which is undigested or partly digested. Oesophagus and stomach can be considered as *Vamaparshwa* because stomach is located in the left lateral side of the abdomen.

When *Annavaha Srotas* gets vitiated, it leads to.

1. *Arochaka*- Anorexia.
2. *Anannabhilasha* – Aversion for food.

Causes of Vitiating of *Annavaha Srotas*

1. *Ahitabhojana* – Intake of unwholesome Diet.
2. *Atimaatrasyaakaale* – Untimely intake of heavy quantity of Diet.
3. *Vaigunyatpaavakasya* – Disturbance or vitiation of the *Jathragni*

GI tract and *Annavaha Srotas*

Mahasrotas is the largest *Srotas* of human body. This can be correlated to the Gastrointestinal Tract or Digestive Tract. In *Ayurveda* *Annavaha Srotas* and *Purishvaha Srotas* combinely can be considered as a whole of Gastrointestinal Tract. Anatomically, *Annavaha Srotas* can be considered as upper part of GIT from mouth to small intestine and *Purishvaha Srotas* can be considered as lower part of GIT including large intestine and anus.

The *Moolsthana* of *Annavaha Srotas*, according to *Charak* is *Aamashya* and *Vamaparshwa*. But according to *Sushruta*, *Moolsthana* of *Annavaha Srotas* is *Aamashya* and *Annavahini Dhamni*. Pulsation is the identifying feature of *Dhamni*. *Dhamni* can be defined as the blood vessels in relation to arteries but here we cannot consider *Annavahini Dhamni* as arteries because no food passes through them.

The word “*Dhamni*” can also be used to denote tubes or channels which carry something. So, oesophagus and small intestine can be considered as *Annavahini Dhamni* as they carry food. In *Ayurveda*, *Agni* is considered as the key factor for *Pachana Kriya*. According to *Ayurveda*, the term “*Agnimandya*” means decrease in the intensity of digestive fire and incomplete digestion and metabolism due to disturbed *Agni* is termed as “*Ajeerna*”. In this modern era, due to sedentary lifestyle, poor dietary habits people are suffering from many

diseases of *Annavaha Srotas*. If the organs of *Annavaha Srotas* do not function properly, it leads to indigestion (*Agnimandya*) which is one of the causative factor of various disorders.

The lakshanas of *Annavaha Srotodusti* includes *Avipaka*, *Chhardi* (nausea and vomiting), *Sanga*, *Arochaka*, *Anannabhilashana*.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

With the help of discussion and analysis through all possible point of views, the conclusion has been drawn. *Srotas* is nothing but a metabolic pathway through which every substance has to pass before getting absorbed. According to *Ayurveda*, the whole body is made up of various *Srotas*. This explains that every human cell is possibly a *Srotas*. Food is very important for human existence. Body converts it into simpler form to obtain energy. So wellbeing of *Annavaha Srotas* is highly essential. The detailed anatomical & physiological vision of *Ayurveda* in this regard is important without which the better understanding about the treatment part can't be developed.

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