

RE-EXAMINING *MUTRA* AND *MUTRAVAHA SROTAS*: CLASSICAL INSIGHTS, MYTHS, AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVES IN AYURVEDIC PHYSIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Ayurvedic physiology views *Mutra* not as mere excretory waste, but as a dynamic *Dravya* central to *Kledavaahana* (the conduction and regulation of metabolic fluids). Article aims

1. To comprehensively examine the classical Ayurvedic concepts of *Mutra* and *Mutravaha Srotas*, including their definitions, functions, and interrelations with other physiological systems.

2. To critically analyze the **physiological significance and contemporary understanding** of *Mutra*, addressing prevalent misconceptions and highlighting its systemic roles. **Data source:** Classical data from *Caraka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanag Sangraha*, *Ashtanga Hrdaya*, *Madhava Nidana*, *Pratyakshashareeram*. Contemporary sources are e

-Journals and Pub-med articles.

Review Methods: A critical literary review of authoritative texts and their commentaries was conducted, using thematic analysis and layered interpretation to model *Mutra*'s role from a digestive byproduct to a systemic facilitator. Supportive theme lines were identified in Pub-med articles. **Conclusion:** Ayurvedic texts portray fluid regulation as an **intelligent, interconnected, and adaptive systemic process**. *Mutra* is central to sustaining fluid homeostasis. This reinterpretation provides a deeper understanding of pathologies like *Prameha*, *Sthoulya*, *Ashmari*, and *Mutraghata*, affirming a holistic vision that bridges textual wisdom with modern systemic physiology. *Mutra* was revealed to be a multidimensional

mediator of fluid (*Kleda*) equilibrium, acting as a transport medium and discriminator of non-essential fluids. The *Mutravaha Srotas* were found to operate as a functional node coordinating fluid dynamics across five other channels, with dynamic adaptability evidenced by seasonal variations (e.g., increased urine in winter, increased sweat in summer). Key misconceptions were successfully debunked.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda, Mutra, Mutravaha Srotas, Kleda, Ambuvaha Srotas, Prameha, Fluid Regulation.*

आयुर्वेदीय सार का संक्षिप्त हिंदी सारांश

उद्देश्य

आयुर्वेदिक शरीरक्रिया मूत्र को केवल उत्सर्जित अपशिष्ट नहीं मानती, बल्कि उसे क्लेदवाहन — अर्थात् द्रव संतुलन एवं चयापचय द्रवों के नियमन का प्रमुख द्रव्य — के रूप में देखती है। इस लेख का उद्देश्य है —

1. मूत्र तथा मूत्रवाह स्रोतस के शास्त्रीय आयुर्वेदिक सिद्धांतों का, उनके परिभाषाओं, कार्यों और अन्य शारीरिक स्रोतसों के साथ परस्पर संबंधों सहित, व्यापक परीक्षण करना।
2. मूत्र के शारीरिक महत्त्व और उसके समकालीन वैज्ञानिक अर्थ का समालोचनात्मक विश्लेषण करना, साथ ही उससे जुड़ी भ्रांतियों का निवारण कर उसके प्रणालीगत कार्यों को उजागर करना।

डाटा स्रोत

मुख्य शास्त्रीय स्रोतों में चरक संहिता, सुश्रुत संहिता, अष्टांग संग्रह, अष्टांग हृदय, माधव निदान तथा प्रत्यक्षशरीरम् का उपयोग किया गया। समकालीन स्रोतों में ई-जर्नल्स और पबमेड (PubMed) लेख सम्मिलित हैं।

समीक्षा विधि

प्रमुख आयुर्वेदिक ग्रंथों और उनके टीकाकारों की समालोचनात्मक साहित्य समीक्षा की गई। इसमें थीमैटिक विश्लेषण और स्तरीकृत व्याख्या के माध्यम से मूत्र की भूमिका को पाचन अपशिष्ट से लेकर प्रणालीगत नियामक तत्व तक रूपांतरित करते हुए अध्ययन किया गया। पबमेड लेखों से सहायक विषयरेखाएँ (supportive themes) पहचानी गईं।

निष्कर्ष

आयुर्वेदिक ग्रंथों में द्रव-नियमन को एक बुद्धिमान, परस्पर-संलग्न और अनुकूलनशील प्रणाली के रूप में चित्रित किया गया है, जिसमें मूत्र द्रव समस्थिति (fluid homeostasis) का प्रमुख केंद्र है। यह पुनर्व्याख्या

प्रमेह, स्थूल्य, अश्मरी और मूत्रघात जैसी विकृतियों की गहन समझ प्रदान करती है। मूत्र को एक बहुआयामी माध्यम के रूप में देखा गया है, जो क्लेद जैसे अनावश्यक द्रवों का चयन कर उन्हें निष्कासित करता है। मूत्रवाह स्रोतस को पाँच अन्य स्रोतसों के साथ समन्वयित द्रव गतिकी (fluid dynamics) के कार्यात्मक नोड के रूप में पाया गया, जिसकी अनुकूलनशीलता ऋतु-भेद के अनुसार बदलती है (जैसे—शीत ऋतु में मूत्र वृद्धि, ग्रीष्म ऋतु में स्वेद वृद्धि)। इस अध्ययन में मूत्र संबंधी अनेक भ्रान्तियों का सफलतापूर्वक निरसन किया गया।

KEY MESSAGE

Ayurveda defines *Mutra* as a multidimensional mediator of systemic fluid homeostasis (*Kledavaahana*), extending beyond excretion and integrating five other channels for adaptive, intelligent regulation. This framework facilitates newer research approaches for fluid and lipid-related metabolic disorders.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurvedic physiology views the human body as a dynamic integration of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, and *Srotas*. Among the *Trimala*, *Mutra* plays a pivotal role by eliminating *Kleda* and maintaining internal fluid balance. Far beyond the modern notion of ‘urine’ as mere ‘an excretory fluid’, classical texts describe *Mutra* as a dynamic *Dravya* engaged in *Kledavaahana*^[1] —the conduction and regulation of metabolic fluids. Ayurveda Acharyas highlight its essential functions, while commentators further expand its scope. Re-examining *Mutra* and *Mutravaha Srotas* offers deeper insight into systemic fluid regulation and its clinical relevance in health and disease.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

While *Mutra* is commonly equated with urine in modern biomedical terms, classical Ayurvedic texts describe it as a dynamic entity central to *Kledavaahana* (fluid regulation and excretion). Similarly, *Mutravaha Sroto Mūla*, though anatomically identified (located) in *Basti* and *Vankshana*, demonstrate functional interconnections with multiple other *Srotas*. This needs integrating classical references with interpretive analysis.

The specific objectives are

1. To explore the classical definitions and descriptions of *Mutra* and its functions as outlined in authoritative Ayurvedic texts and commentaries.

2. To analyse the layers of physiological understanding of *Mutra* —from digestive byproduct to systemic facilitator.
3. To critically examine the role of *Mutravaha Srotas* in relation to other *Srotas* such as *Ambuvaha*, *Rasavaha*, *Raktavaha*, *Medovaha*, and *Swedavaha*.
4. To identify and clarify common myths and misconceptions surrounding *Mutra* and *Mutravaha Srotas*.

METHODOLOGY

This work adopts a **critical literary review approach**. The methodology involves

1. Primary Source Review

Examination of the *Caraka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with their commentaries to collect references pertaining to *Mutra*, *Mutravaha Srotas*, and *Kledavaahana*.

2. Thematic Analysis

Textual data were organized thematically to extract definitions, functional descriptions, *srotomula* identifications, and cross-references to *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, and *Agni*.^[2]

3. Layered Interpretation

Based on textual evidence, layered models of *Mutra* 's role was constructed—considering it as a digestive byproduct, transport medium, fluid discriminator, and systemic facilitator.

4. Functional Integration

Comparative analysis of different *Srotas* was carried out to establish systemic interconnections in fluid regulation.

5. Contextual Correlation

Seasonal variations and pathological references were analysed to contextualize the practical and clinical relevance of *Mutra* and its *Srotas*.

2. Classical Perspectives on *Mutra*

2.1 Definition and Nature

The terminal product of the food consumed is termed as *Prasada* and *Kitta Bhaga*.^[3] The former is the nutritive essence while the latter is the product that is not nutritive but essential to physiology. *Kitta Bhaga* thus includes *Trimala* as well as *Dhatumala*.^[4] Among the – the *Trimala*, *Mala* which is the fluid waste (*Accha Bhaga*) i.e., *Dravamala* is called *Mutra*.^[5]

Commentator *Indu* describes *Mutra* as “that which conducts the *Annarasa Kleda*,”^[6] meaning the wetness or fluidic portion derived from digested food. *Sushruta* defines its function as *Basti Poorana*—the pooling of wetness in the bladder and *Basti Vikledana*, enhancing fluidity within the *Basti*.^[7] *Vagbhata* emphasizes its role in *Kledavaahana*, transporting excess fluid outward, with commentators clarifying this as “*Kledasya Bahirnirgamanam*,” the elimination of *Kleda*.^[8]

2.2 Governing Factors

The formation and elimination of *Mutra* are regulated by several functional entities:

- *Samana Vayu* – governs digestion and separation of *Sara-Kitta*.^{[9],[10]}
- *Pachaka Pitta* – aids in transformation at the digestive level.^[11]
- *Vyana Vayu* – circulates fluids systemically and ultimately reaches *Mutravadhamani*.^{[12],[13],[14]}
- *Apana Vayu* – executes expulsion from the *Basti*.^{[15],[16],[17]}

This intricate regulation underscores *Mutra*’s multidimensional role in homeostasis.

3. Layers of Understanding *Mutra* in Physiology

Classical references allow us to construct multiple interpretive layers.

1. *Mutra* as a Byproduct of Digestion

Generated as *Kitta* during *Sthula* and *Anu-Pachana*,^[18] *Mutra* emerges from *Annarasa* and represents the excretory fraction. This fraction originates within the digestive system under the influence of *Jatharagni*. Here, it is seen as a major metabolic residue.

2. *Mutra* as a Passive Transport Medium

Acting as a carrier, *Mutra* transports fluid from various sites to the *Basti*. This role emphasizes circulation rather than discrimination, akin to a mechanical vehicle of excretion. This is supported by the explanation ‘*Mutram Kledam Nirvahayati*’.^[19]

3. *Mutra* as a Discriminator of Non-Essential Fluids

Beyond passivity, *Mutra* participates actively in distinguishing *Sara* (essential) from *Kitta* (non-essential), thereby ensuring fluid balance. This role implies systemic intelligence in regulating body fluids. While *Sara-Kitta Vibhajana* is function of *Samanavata*, in entirety of the *Shareera* this intelligence has to flow to demarcate only those materials which are to be excreted and which are to be kept in circulation duly. This intelligence is also carried by

Mutra itself. This thought is supported by function of *Samanavata* – *Pakvaamaashaya-doshamalashukraartva- ambuvaha- srotovichaaree Taadavalambana- Dharana- Paachana- Vivechan-KIIttaadhonayanaadikriyah*.^[20]

4. *Mutra* as a Systemic Facilitator

Extending beyond the gut, *Kleda* is produced during *Dhatvagni* activity at tissue levels, emerging at each stage of nutrient transformation which is recognized as *Dhatusnehaparampara*. This *Kleda* is collected and transported towards a bigger pool of *Mutra*.^[21]

5. *Mutra* as the fluid waste excreted out of the body

In here, it is referred to as '*Mehana*' or '*Ksharana*'. The definition of '*Meha*' is *Mehati Ksharati Shukraadiraana Iti*.^[22] Here '*Mih Dhatu*' originating as '*Sechane*'^[23] meaning - To irrigate, to wet, to sprinkle, to urinate and '*Kshar Dhatu*' (*Ksharana*) originating as '*Sanchalane/Sravane/Mochane*'^[24] meaning -To flow, to ooze, to drip.[Fig1] So, the question right now is when does this 'fluid metabolic waste' really get to be called as *Mutra* as it continues to participate in both production and clearance across metabolic pathways, at multiple stages, micro and macro levels. Taken together, these perspectives reframe *Mutra* as not just a waste but a dynamic mediator^[25] of internal fluid equilibrium. Although *Kleda* has different trajectories and not just associated with *Mutra*, but majorly the conduction of *Kleda* (*Kledavaahana*) is occurring due to *Mutra* alone.

4. *Mutravaha Srotas*: Classical Descriptions and Functional Reinterpretation

4.1 Classical View

Classical texts identify *Basti* (urinary bladder and its organ systems including *Vrukka*) and *Vankshana* (inguinal region) as the primary sites of *Mutravaha Srotas*.^{[26], [27]} This anatomical description underpins traditional diagnosis and treatment of disorders (*Mutrapradosha*) such as *Mutraghata*, *Ashmari*, and *Prameha*.^[28] Here *Basti* – the *Koshthanga* has descriptions like *Bastih Mutrakoshah*^[29] and *Bastih Mootraashayah*.^[30]

4.2 Description about *Basti* and *Vankshana*

4.2.1 *Basti*

The primary physiological functions of the urinary system (*Basti*) and related processes, derived from the text's descriptions of pathology, revolve around the handling and movement of fluid (*Apah/Kleda*)^[31] and the subtle processes of exchange.

1. Fluid Exchange and Nourishment (*Upasneha*)

The text suggests that fluids, including precursors to urine, enter the body's minute structures through a subtle process.

- **Subtle Entry:** The entry of fluids is compared to the entry of *Vata* and other *Doshas* and is described as occurring via exudation (*Nishyandana*).^{[32],[33]}
- **Moistening/Nourishment (*Upasneha*):** *Upasneha* is defined as the satiation/nourishment (*Apyaayana*) by the essential fluid (*Saarabhutarasena – Ahara Rasa*) through the channels of the minute hair-follicles (*Sukshmalomakoopaayanaih*). This process demonstrates the natural state of wetness (*Aardreebhavam*) from the moisture of water,^[34] etc. (*Udakaadi Kledat*). This concept highlights that the body's minute channels are constantly engaged in fluid uptake and exchange.

2. Collection and Flow (*Basti* and *Sraavana*)

The urinary bladder (*Basti*) is the final receptacle for urine, which is primarily a liquid state of *Kapha* and other fluids.

- **Filling Mechanism**
 - The bladder, though situated downward, is continuously filled.
 - The urine flows into the bladder through countless **minute channels** (*Sūkṣmamukha-sahasra*) by **exudation** (*Nishyandana*).^[35]
 - The analogy of the **new earthen pot submerged in water** highlights that the liquid passes through the pot's porous sides (analogous to the bladder wall/surrounding structures) rather than just through a single large opening, emphasizing the continuous and subtle nature of fluid entry.
- **Fluid Composition:** Urine is associated with the moisture of water, etc. (*Udakaadi Kledat*). The passage explicitly mentions the constant flow/entry of *Mutra*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* along the proper excretory path.
- **Excretion:** The normal state of these substances is one of flow (*Sraavana*) and non-solidity. In a state of health (*Swastha*), the flow of *Mutra*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* occurs smoothly, preventing the formation of stones or any other pathologies.

3. Maintaining Fluidity (*Vilayana* and *Kledana*)

The body must maintain the fluidity of internal substances for proper excretion.

- **Liquefaction (*Vilayana*):** The normal state of fluid is characterized by the absence of coagulation. When pathological coagulation (*Skandana*) occurs, the therapeutic action to

restore health is **liquefaction**, which returns the fluid to a liquid state (*Dravabhava*). This implies that maintaining is a key homeostatic function.

- **Moistening (*Kledana*):** The general function of is to maintain **moistening, wetting, and saturation**.^[36]

The texts imply that excretion is successful when two elements work correctly: the liquidity of the contents and the proper movement of *Vata*. It is responsible for the proper, downward movement (*Anulomana*).^[37] of fluids and excreta. While Normal internal heat/fire (*Jatharagni*) is correctly channelled, supporting healthy metabolism without causing excessive drying. Excretion is the culmination of these functions, preventing obstruction and stagnation. The flow of *Mutra*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* and is maintained along the proper path. Two conclusions can be drawn from this – either *Basti* should be just an organ to collect *Mutra* at the end of metabolism serving as the vessel which collects and stores until its excreted or *Basti* is an umbrella term covering anatomical sites which participate in a bigger physiological cascade. While the latter seems more plausible with the explanations done until now. Thus, *Basti* isn't just urinary bladder but also includes few other organs and channels connecting it to entire body, explanation of which is provided by Acharya Sushruta.^{[38], [39]}

4.2.2 *Vankshana*

Vankshana as 'Vakshati Samhato Bhavateeti / Vaksh + Lyuh Pratyaya / Prushodaraaditvaat Num meaning *Urusandhi* i.e., meeting space of 'Uru' – thighs with the upper part of the body. √वक्ष् धातु from which the word *Vankshana* originates means To collect, To gather.^[40] This is a description of a shallow area which paves way for the channels to pass down and reach the ultimate vessel – *Basti*. Thus, the internal structures are two *Mutravaahi Siras* in other words the ureters which have the course in the pelvic girdle and inguinal region. But still there is lack of clarity as to where this *Mutravaahi Siras* begin from. They begin from *Vrukka*.

4.2.3 *Vrukka*

Only the authentic book of recent times, *Pratyaksha Shareera* has acknowledged the involvement of *Vrukka* in physiology of *Mutra*. But true to the fact presented by modern scientists, Kidneys are part of urinary system.^{[41], [42]}

4.2.4 *Basti* as part of *Pureeshadharakala* / *Maladhara Kala*

The general location of *Basti* within the *Kukṣi* (abdomen) places it anatomically near the structures that constitute the *Pureeshadharakala*.^[43] emphasizing this location within the

shared visceral space. *Basti* as the *Mutrashaya* (urinary reservoir) its function of channelling fluid and its proximity to the *Guda* (gut) link it functionally and anatomically to the other abdominal spaces, including the *Pureeshadharakala*. *Basti* is identified as a vital organ that serves as the storage site for **urinary waste**. The mechanism of filling is described using a powerful natural analogy: the several minute urinary channels, which originate near the digestive terminus (*Pakvaashaya*), constantly feed the bladder, similar to how countless rivers perpetually feed and sustain the ocean.^{[44],[45]} This underscores the continuous and essential nature of urine formation and excretion.

4.3 *Basti* as *Mutraadhaara* and Origin of *Ambuvaha Srotas*

Texts also designate *Basti* as *Mutra-aadhaara*,^[46] *Marma* and the basin of *Ambuvaha Srotas*.^[47] This extends *Basti*'s role beyond urine storage, situating it at the centre of systemic water regulation. [Fig 2]

4.4 Functional Integration with Other *Srotas*

- ***Ambuvaha Srotas***: coordinate water regulation.
- ***Rasavaha Srotas***: initial distribution of nutrients and fluids.
- ***Raktavaha Srotas***: blood-based fluid transport requiring clearance.
- ***Medovaha Srotas***: link between fat metabolism and fluid imbalance, crucial in *Prameha*.
- ***Swedavaha Srotas***: complementary to *Mutra* in fluid excretion.

This reveals *Mutravaha Srotas* as nodes within a broader fluid-regulatory matrix and thus *Basti* holds greater responsibilities than just collecting Urine. It is the site where,

- *Mutra* is collected and stored and prepared for excretion
- Sends signals and coordinates with rest of the body about the state of fluids in the body.
- Only that much quantity of *Mutra* is excreted through each *Vega* (stimulus) which balances the fluid that needs to retain in the body.
- Its cellular intelligence in working to keep the whole *Kledavaahana* under control.

These dynamisms in the homeostasis of *Mutra* is readily observed in seasonal variations of fluids that retains or exits the body.

4.5 Seasonal Physiology as Evidence

- **Summer (*Greeshma*):** More sweat, less urine—*Swedavahana* predominates. This is supported by the commentary of *Arunadatta* on the word “*Atiteekshanaa Amshavah*” as ‘*Greeshme Sankshipateeva Jagatsneham*’.^[48]
- **Winter (*Hemanta, Shishira*):** Less sweat, more urine—*Mutravahana* predominates. This is supported by the explanation of *Arunadatta* – *Ushma Bahih Pratihato Himasheetavataih Antahshareeravivaram Pratipadyamaanah*.^[49]

Such variations demonstrate the cooperative dynamics of *Srotas* in maintaining *Kledavaahana* due to changes in *Agnisthithi* across seasons.

5. *Mutra* and *Kledavaahana*: Myths and Misconceptions

Myth 1: *Mutra* is only excretory waste

Debunking: Classical references portray *Mutra* as regulator, transporter, and mediator of fluid balance—not merely an inert residue.

Myth 2: *Mutravaha Srotas* are limited to the urinary tract

Debunking: While *Basti* and *Vankshana* are cited as *Moola Sthana*, systemic interpretations reveal overlaps with *Ambuvaha Srotas*, *Rasavaha*, *Raktavaha*, *Medovaha*, and *Swedavaha Srotas*.

Myth 3: Urine output is fixed and mechanical

Debunking: Seasonal variations reveal dynamic adaptability. For instance, in summer, increased intake with reduced urine output contrasts with winter physiology where reduced intake coexists with higher urine production. This adaptability highlights systemic plasticity. These clarifications expand the role of *Mutra* far beyond conventional notions.

6. Integrated View of Fluid Regulation

Re-examining *Mutra* and its *Srotas* leads to a systems-level perspective:

- *Srotas* are interconnected, not isolated.
- *Kledavaahana* is a distributed process involving multiple tissues and pathways.
- *Mutra* acts as the central *Dravya* ensuring balance across contexts.

This integrated understanding enriches both theory and clinical practice, bridging textual wisdom with modern systemic biology.

7. Clinical Implications

Understanding *Mutra* as multidimensional has practical significance:

- **Prameha:** Fluid imbalance rooted in *Medas* and *Kleda* metabolism; *Mutra* analysis vital.
- **Sthoulya (obesity):** Dysregulation of *Medovaha* and *Mutravaha Srotas*.
- **Ashmari (urinary calculi):** Disturbed fluid crystallization and *Kleda* clearance.
- **Mutraghata (urinary obstruction):** Disrupted *Apana Vayu* and *Basti* function.

A systemic model aids precise *Chikitsa*, tailoring interventions for diet, lifestyle, and therapeutics to restore *Kledavaahana*.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of *Mutra* and *Mutravaha Srotas* reveals that Ayurvedic physiology perceives fluid regulation as a highly intelligent, interconnected, and adaptive process rather than a linear excretory pathway. *Mutra* emerges not as a mere waste but as a dynamic mediator of *Kledavaahana*, embodying the fine balance between retention and elimination, dryness and moisture, and internal and external harmony. The classical identification of *Basti* and *Vankshana* as the *Moola Sthana* symbolically anchors this network, yet its functional reach extends through *Ambuvaha*, *Rasavaha*, *Raktavaha*, *Medovaha*, and *Swedavaha Srotas*, reflecting an elegant systemic unity. Recognizing these interrelations provides a deeper understanding of *Prameha*, *Sthoulya*, *Ashmari*, and *Mutraghata*, where disturbed *Kleda* dynamics manifest pathologically.

This multidimensional reinterpretation debunks myths around *Mutra*, reinstates Ayurveda's holistic vision, inviting integrative dialogue with modern hemodynamic and renal physiology, and reaffirming *Mutra*'s central role in sustaining fluid homeostasis and overall systemic intelligence. This conclusion is grounded in a **critical literary review**, systematically applying **thematic analysis** and **layered interpretation** across core classical texts and commentaries. This robust methodology establishes a functionally integrated model of *Mutra* and its *Srotas*, providing a system-level understanding vital for clinical correlation and future research.

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