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A systematic review on concept of *Annavaha Srotas* and its clinical aspect

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ABSTRACT

The doshas of the body, Vata, pitta and kapha move from one part of the body to another via channels called srotamsi (pleural). The largest srotas (singular) or channel is the MahaSrotas or gastrointestinal tract (Maha – large or great). The Srotas or channels which carry 'Anna' or food are called AnnavahaSrotas. This can be correlated to the alimentary tract or gastrointestinal tract or digestive tract. According to Charaka, Annavaha Srotas contains much, gala, vamaparshwa (annanalika), amashaya and laghuantra. Anna Vaha Srotas are those channels in the body which transport the food and liquids we take. We take varieties of food on daily basis. Through these porous channels or srotamsi oxygen and nutrients can be absorbed and waste products like carbon dioxide can be expelled. So, the srotamsi or channels in the body act like paths or roadways transporting blood and sensory information, absorbing nutrients and expelling waste products from the body. Each srotas has a srotomula (root), a srotomarga (passage) and srotomukha (mouth or opening).

Key words: *Annavaha Srotas, Mahasrotas, Amashaya, Laghu Antra.*

INTRODUCTION

“Srusarati” means to flow, to exude, to ooze, to filter, to permeate.^[1] By etymology srotas is what, within which something flows or carried. In Ayurved great emphasis has laid upon concept of srotas and got immense importance because the sharir or purush is assumed to be made of innumerable Srotas. Srotas is the functional channel within the living body, concerned with one exclusive vital function. Srotas are the base of transformation of nutrients in biological elements, being the metabolic center of that particular

dhatu, transport of nutrients and waste products. Later in Srotovimanadhyaya Acharya Charaka has discussed the concept of Srotas elaborately. Srotas are micro or macro spaces in the body which carry the different biochemical molecules during the process of metabolism. Acharya Charaka further describes these srotas as the functional pathways for nutritive (prasadakhya) and non-nutritive or waste (malakhya) molecules.^[2] Acharya Charaka has very clearly said that all the biochemical molecules under metabolic processes (parinammadyamana dhatus) are held and carried within the srotas.^[3] These pathways are spread throughout the body nourishing all the Dhatus at cellular level. Whatever is needful is taken up by the dhatus or cells. This is called as Law of selection of nutrients during nourishment of dhatu. Srotas are the seat of all metabolic actions like transport, transformation, excretion of the concerned biochemical molecules.

Though conceptually srotas are innumerable, certain number are assumed according to their specified functions so they are 13 in number according to Acharya Charaka^[4] and 11 according to Acharya

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Sushrut.^[5] Chakrapani has described Mool as Prabhavsthana^[6] means the anatomical seat of respective srotas, etiopathology of that srotas or principle seat of manifestation of the diseases of that srotas. The cause of morbidity of srotas and their manifestations first strikes the mool sthana of the respective srotas.

ANNAVAHA SROTAS

The Srotas or channels which carry 'Anna' or food are called Annavaaha Srotas. This can be correlated to the alimentary tract or gastrointestinal tract or digestive tract. Anna Vaha Srotas are those channels in the body which transport the food and liquids we take. The food which we take and place in the mouth moves down towards the stomach through the food pipe called esophagus. Here the food gets partially digested and is passed on to the intestines for further digestion. It take moves from our mouth to the stomach and later to the intestines to get digested and get converted into a form which is absorbable and usable by the body tissues. Thus, the unrestricted movement of food from upper passages to the lower passages of gastro-intestinal or digestive tract is needed for the body to procure nutrition. The movement of food takes place in the channels of the body and these channels leading from mouth to the intestines are called Anna Vaha Srotas. (Anna=Food, Vaha=Carry, Srotas=Channels).

Origin and location of Annavaaha Srotas

According to Sushruta^[7]

Annavaaha Srotas have their roots in:

Aamashaya (Stomach) and Annavaahini Dhamani's (The channels which carry the food). When the Annavaaha Srotas gets injured or obstructed (blocked) or damaged it causes the below mentioned symptoms:

1. Aadhmaana – Distension of abdomen
2. Shula – Pain abdomen (Colic)
3. Anna Vidweshya – Aversion towards food
4. Chardi – Vomiting
5. Pipasa – Thirst

6. Aandhya – Blindness

7. Maranam – Death

According to Charaka

The Annavaaha Srotas are 2 in number.^[8] They are rooted in Aamashaya – Stomach and Vama Parshva – (left lateral side of the abdomen or belly). When Annavaaha Srotas gets vitiated or damaged, it causes the below mentioned symptoms:

1. Anannaabhilasha - No interest towards food or aversion towards food.
2. Arochaka - Anorexia

Causes for vitiation of Annavaaha Srotas^[9]

Atimaatrasyaakaale - untimely intake of heavy quantity of food.

Ahitabhojana - unwholesome food.

Vaigunyatpaavakasya - disturbance or vitiation of the belly fire.

Management of vitiation of Annavaaha Srotas

The disorders arising from the vitiation of Annavaahasrotas should be treated on the lines of treatment of Amapradoshya (i.e. treatment of disorders arising due to the presence of improperly processed food and tissue toxins arising due to sluggish tissue metabolism, in short it should be treated on the lines of treatment of metabolic errors). Thus Deepana (fire increasing medicines, metabolism increasing medicines and treatments, appetizers) and Pachana (digestants and medicines destroying ama) should be administered.

DISCUSSION

Food is required for life and the digestion of food gets starts right from mouth itself. According to Charaka, Annavaaha Srotas contains mukh, gala, vamaparshwa (annanalika), amashaya and laghuantra.^[10] Tridosha, Dhātu, upadhātu and mala are the important factors in each digestion in the body According Ayurveda Bodhak Kapha at tounge, kledak kapha in aamashaya plays very important roll in mixing and churning of food as well as secretion of gastric juices which plays

very important role in food digestion.^[11] the distal part of aamashaya, food gets processed by pachak pitta, jatharagni, bhootagni as well samaanvayu and this process of digestion gets continued till the end of small intestine.^[12] Till this part of the body, the food nutrients gets digested and converted by related secretions and aahararasa gets ready for the nutrition to another Dhatus. Hence forth food gets converted into mala and thus katuavasthapaaka gets completed and normal vatadosha gets formed and that after in pakwashaya, the separation of drava and kitta mala takes place.

Both Charaka and Sushruta have mentioned Amashaya as the root for Annava Srotas. Aamashaya means the place or site for ama or improperly digested food. Thus, Aamashaya points towards stomach. Stomach is an organ where the food is partially digested before it is pushed on to the intestines for further digestion. This partially digested food is called ama. (Ashaya means the abode or place for something to stay or shelter, generally denotes one or the other organ). Aamashaya should also be applicable to oesophagus (food pipe) and most part of small intestine because they too carry food. The signs and symptoms of injury to the Annava Srotas as explained by both Charaka and Sushruta, points out towards the Stomach pathology. Here injury or damage need not occur due to external injury (the effect of injury may be more severe), it is also due to the damage effected on the Annava Srotas by the vitiated doshas (internal injury or damage).

Thirst, blindness and death mentioned by Sushruta as the symptoms of Annava Srotas damage point towards the later complications. They may also suggest effects of chronic malnutrition. These symptoms also point towards external injuries like stab etc.

Annava Srotas

The actual meaning of dhamani is blood vessels with special reference to arteries, the pulsation being the feature of identification of dhamani. Here we cannot consider artery as annava Srotas because no

food passes through them. If dhamani is taken in the meaning of tubes or channels, oesophagus and small intestine can be considered as Annava Srotas. The blood vessels and nerves supplying the stomach and upper alimentary tract can also be considered as Annava Srotas.

Vamaparshwa

Left lateral side of the body (oesophagus and stomach can be taken as vamaparshwa, stomach is located in the left lateral side of the abdomen)

CONCLUSION

Annava Srotas is the channel which oversees the intake of food. Mainly constructed of the digestive tract, and absorbs nutrients through the food consumed. Every feature described in Asta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan has a functional logic behind it responsible for maintaining good health. Food is the most important necessity of humankind. We are taking good food in terms of quality and quantity, but we are at lowest of health and immunity. The body needs to convert it into a form which is suitable to body tissues and to keep up the energy, health, immunity and life process intact. If the stomach and intestines do not function properly and if they cannot digest the given food properly, it leads to indigestion. This indigestion is the basic culprit which causes many systemic illnesses. Therefore, first and foremost need to take care of our stomach and appetite.

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