

A REVIEW: AYURVEDIC AND HISTORICAL ASPECT OF SROTASA

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ABSTRACT

The term srotas means a body passages or body channels. It is derived from the root su sravane meaning to exude; to ooze; to filter, to permeate. Charak has defined it as sravanat srotamsi² meaning the structure through which sravanam takes place. These channels are present throughout the visible and invisible body of the cells, molecules and atoms. The body channels carry solids, liquids, gases, nerve impulses, nutrients, waste products and secretions in and out of the human body physiologies. According to some Physicians human body is a network of appropriate nutrients and energies through the channels results in healthy mind and body Any kind of blockage, deficiency or excess in the channels can result in various diseases.

KEYWORD: Ayurved, Srotas, Dhatu.

INTRODUCTION

The term srotas means a channel. It is derived from the root meaning, to exude; to ooze; to filter; to permeate. Charaka has defined it as wafe meaning, the structure through which sravanam takes place. Srotamsi of the body comprise of channels of different kinds.

The term rasadi dhatu, used in the context of srotamsi needs a clarification. It refers to the sthaya or poshyarasa cum rakta, which circulate and transport poshaka to other poshya or sthaya dhatu. The fluid that circulates through dhmanis (arteries) and siras (veins), which latter have their origin in the hridaya (heart), has been usually described by ayurveda as rasa. This rasa is the fluid matrix which not only serves as the vehicle of transport of sthaya rakta dhatu but also of poshaka (nutrient) dhatu meant to nourish other sthaya dhatu. It oozes or exudes, diffuses, filters, or permeates through the ayanamukhas of srotamsi. A distinction between the circulating rasa and rakta cannot, possibly, be made as the fluid that circulates in dhmanis and siras is a composite whole and a complex flowing tissue. A reference was made earlier to ayurveda sutra, according to which rasa itself is rakta and rakta is both rasa and rakta. The term malakhya dhatu is significant and, it has reference to waste products or the degraded elements of tissues, which are not meant to be discarded entirely. As shown earlier, while discussing the concept of dhatu and upadhatu, a part of malas is utilised for the synthesis of some of the structural elements of the body as well as to subservise some of the vital functions of the organism,

while, a part is utilised to compose excrements which are periodically thrown out of the body. Poshaka dhatus are constants of the circulating rasa-rakta, sthaya dhatus are seldom without malas. Examples of lactic acid, urea, uric acid ketone bodies etc. They may be sthula (gross, macroscopic) or sukshma or anu (subtle or atomic in size or microscopic). In general usage, the term srotamsi comprehends all channels-big and small, perceptible and imperceptible that compose the internal transport system of the body.^[1]

Derivation of term srotas

Srotas can be defined as “transporting passages of dhatu undergoing transformation.”

1. According to Shabdakalpadrum

The term srotas is derived from the sanskrit root ‘sru gatau’

Srotas^[1] = sru gatau + asun pratyaya + tuta pratyaya

Means srotas is that part of body by which prana & ahar move through out the body. according to this, srotas is that structure through which sravan kriya takes place with motion.

2. According to Amarkosh

Srotas has been defined as 'srotoambu saranam swatah' meaning the channels through which natural flow occurs.

3. According to Vachaspathyam and Vedic Shabda Sindhu

According to these vedic classics, srotas is considered as chhidra or dwar of body.

4. According to Charak

A. charak has defined the srotas as – ‘srawanat srotamsi’^[1] meaning the structure through which srawana or the flow occurs is srotas.

B. “some people say that a person is only and aggregate of srotas because of their pervasiveness and diffusiveness of agents aggravating and pacifying the doshas.”^[1]

5. According to V.S.apte

V.S. Apte in sanskrit to english dictionarie, said that srotas is the channel of nutrient & water in the body through it flow.

6. According to Monneir Williams

Meaning of srotas is the course or current of nutriment in the body, channel or course for conveying food or an aperture in the human or animal body (reckoned to be 9 in men and 11 in women).

7. According to Chakrapani

Chakrapani has commented on charak that ‘srawanaditi rasaderev poshyasya srawanat saranad desanter gamnata’^[1]

Means srotas is an organ which forms the medium to transfer the current of nutrients, which nurtures rasadi dhatus. This interpretation shows that 'srawan karm' is the circulation of poshak rasa etc in poshya dhatu that is carried by srotas.

8. According to kaviraj gangadhar^[3]

“Srawanad rasadi sarawapathatwat srotansyu uchyante” Kaviraj gangadhar has said that srotas is the channels by which rasa and various dhatus move throughout the body.

9. According to kaviraj ganath sen “Srawanam syandanam”.

10. According to C. Dwarkanath^[4]

The term srotas means a channel. it is derived from the root "sru srawane meaning the structure to exude, to ooze, to filter and to permeate. charak has defined it as srawanad srotansi meaning the structure through which srawanaam takes place.

Historical aspect of srotas

The term srotas will be used since vedic eras in different contexts. Although the term srotas is not used all places but also its various synonyms were used at different references.our four main vedas rigveda. samaveda, yajurveda and atharva veda are considered as ultimate source of knowledge. in vedas description of srotas is available as different names as srotayaya, panthan, dhamanyah, nadi etc.

Srotas in Rigveda^[5]

Rigveda is the most ancient literature of the world. in this veda following reference are available regarding srotas

- *Girinam sru bhiresam*

- *Ugro yathi nitayah srotas sasrijat*^[6]

Srotas in Yajurveda

In yajurveda the term srotas is not present but its synonym like as sira, pantha, kulyaya is frequently used here and there. In the term hirabhi srawanti, srawanti is used for srotas. in another verse term panthan is used for srotas. Of pranavaha srotas is described in the name of pransays pantha and function of prana and vyan vayu are also described in detail. The following terms were used in yajurveda as a synonym of srotas-

Srutyaya sarsyaya panthayaya kulyaya vaishantyaya

Srotas in atharva veda

The atharvaveda is a sacred text of hindusm, and one of the four vedas, often called the "fourth veda". According to tradition, the atharvaveda was mainly composed by two groups of rishis known as the atharvanas and the angirasa, hence its oldest name is ātharvāngirasa. following terms related to srotas are described in atharvaveda-

Antresu – this term resembles with antra (intestine) and it has been used for annavaha srotas.

Asrava – asrava means flow of blood, which denotes the flowing nature of srotas.

Dhamani- this term is used as a synonym of srotas. body is a network of sira and dhamanies for blood circulation and they are thousands in number.

Gavinyan: gavini is called ureters so this term is used to describe mutravaha srotas.

Hira- this word corresponds to sira. It is mentioned that blood, which flows in the hira contains two peculiar colours viz tivra arun (fast red colour - pure blood) and tamra dhumra (blue reddish- impure blood).

Panth and panthan- These Synonym of srotas have been used to express the meaning of marga (channels or passages).

Saptakhani and navdwar – total nine external openings (chidra) have been described in ayurveda. seven external openings are present in upper part of body while rest two are present in lower part of body. this seven Openings are indicated as saptakhani. And contains two eyes, two nostrils, two ears and one mouth. Rest two openings are urethral and anus and all these constitutes navdwar.

Srotyah- srotyah means continuous flow or transportation. this term corresponds to the constant flowing nature of srotas.

Srotas in Srimad Bhagwat Gita

The bhagavad gita (*bhagavad gītā* means "song of god"), also more simply known as gita, is a sacred hindu scripture. The bhagavad gita comprises roughly 700

verses, and is a part of the *mahabharata*. The bhagavad gita is also called *gītopaniṣad*, implying its having the status of an upanishad, i.e. A vedantic scripture. In geeta the term *dwar* has been used in the place of *srotas* in the description of *navdwar* (nine external openings of the body).

Srotas in Upanishad

The Sanskrit term *upaniṣad* derives from *upa-* (nearby), *ni-* (at the proper place, down) and *sad* ("sitting down near"). The upanishads are hindu scriptures that constitute the core teachings of vedanta. The upanishads have exerted an important influence on the rest of hindu Philosophy.

In the second chapter of *shwetashwopnishad*, the word *srotamsi* has been used for *manovahni srotas*, while the *srotas* has been resembled with the path of transportation of water. In *atmopnishad*, *srotas* has been used for the water falls due to constantly flowing nature in this compendium. The word *srotas* is also mentioned as *saptavahya srotas* (seven eternal openings) in *gobhil grihya sutra*. In *drahyayan grihya sutra*, there is a clear concept of *vahya srotas* in this classic."

Srotas in Purana

The puranas are a vast treasure of literary and spiritual knowledge that throw light on past, present and future. It is said that the puranas are the richest collection of mythological information in this world. Each of these puranas is a book of hymns, stories, knowledge and instructions regarding sacred rituals and the way life should be led. It contains cosmic knowledge and how the universe affects our living. Traditionally, there are supposed to be 18 major puranas. In *padma purana*, *srotas* has been discussed in *sharirotpatti adhyaya* and it is compared with the ever flowing falls, originated from the mount. All *srotas* as in the body keep on flowing continuously like falls.

Srotas in Greek

Of all the traditional medical systems being practiced today, greek medicine has the most in common with ayurveda. Both systems are constitutionally based, and deal with the relative balance of certain vital fluids or humors. Each humor or *dosha* has its own basic constitutional type, and mixed types exist. The people of greek have the concept that the whole body is composed of *srotas*, which is known as *petu*. They were of the opinion that disease occurs due to obstruction of *srotas* and entering of *bahedu*.

Synonyms of Srotas^[7]

Srotamsi of the body comprise of channels of different kinds. In general usage the term *srotamsi* comprehends all channels-big and small, perceptible and imperceptible, that compose the internal transport system of the body as several of its more important *pariyayas* furnished below will show.

1. *Srotamsi* (channels)

2. *Siras*(veins)
3. *Dhamanis*(arteries)
4. *Rasayanis*(lymphatics ducts)
5. *Rasavahinis*(capillaries)
6. *Nadis*(tubular conduits)
7. *Panthanas*(passages)
8. *Margas*(pathways or tracts)
9. *Sharir chidras*(body orifices, openings, cavities)
10. *Samvruta samvrutani*(open or blind passages)
11. *Sthanas*(sites or locus)
12. *Ashayas*(container)
13. *Niketsas*(resorts)

Samanya Swaroop Of Srotamsi^[8,9,10]

The definitions mentioned by different classics pertains that *srotas* are both the visible and invisible channels that afford passage to the movement of *sharira dhatus*. In their colour and form they are stated to take after the *dhatus* they transport; they may be cylindrical, either *sthula* (gross, macroscopic) or *anu* (atomic in size or microscopic), *dirgha* (long) or *pratana* (reticulated).

The internal transport system of the body; represented by *srotamsi*, has been given a place of fundamental importance in Ayurveda-both in health and disease - an importance, which recent developments in the field of medicine have begun to emphasise. It would seem, when looked at from a historical perspective, that *Punarvasu atreya* and *Dhanvantari* were the first to correlate the structural and functional integrity of this system to physiological states and likewise, the impairment of their integrity, to pathological states. Says *Punarvasu Atreya*: No structure in the body can grow and develop or waste and atrophy, independent of *srotamsi* that transport *dhatus*, which latter, are constantly subjected to (metabolic) transformations. The *srotamsi* subserve the needs of transportation.

A careful study of the chapter on *sroto vimana*, in *Charaka samhita* shows that the knowledge of the internal transport system of the body had reached a high degree of development, even as early as, the time of *Punarvasu Atreya*. This is seen from his statement that, "There is as much diversity in the *srotamsi*, as there is in the elements, that compose the structure of the body". It would appear that, some of the contemporaries of *Punarvasu Atreya* went to the extent of advancing the view, that "man is nothing but a conglomeration of *srotamsi* which pervade the entire body. They are transporters of factors that cause the *prakopa* (excitation) or *shamana* (alleviation) of *doshas*".

CONCLUSION

A careful study of the chapter on *sroto vimana*, in *Charaka samhita* shows that the knowledge of the internal transport system of the body had reached a high degree of development, even as early as the time of *Punarvasu Atreya*. This is seen from his statement that, "There is as much diversity in the *srotamsi*, as there is in the elements that compose the structure of the body". It

would appear that, some of the contemporaries of Punarvasu Atreya went to the extent of advancing the view, that "man is nothing but a conglomerates of srotamsi which pervade the entire body. They are transporters of factors that cause the prakopa (excitation) or shamana (alleviation) of doshas." Atreya is seen to have, however, pointed out that this view is an exaggerated one and, drew attention to factors other than srotamsi which are equally important. These factors are: the elements that compose the srotamsi, the substances they transport, the dhatus to which they serve as channels of transport and, the regions of the body which they cover. He has, in addition, taken note of such views as: (a) the multitudinousness and innumerability of srotamsi, as well as, (b) the numerability of them held in his times and, suggested that "for all practical purposes, a physician only needs to recognise the more sthula (grosser, macroscopic) of the srotamsi, having regard to their origin, course and symptoms they exhibit when they are pathologically involved. The nature of other srotamsi, not described, has to be inferred. Important ones, among them, stated to be significant, from the point of view of practical utility.

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