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यन्कृष्णद्वारकोसमकल्पयन् ॥१॥ विश्वकर्मोणमाद्रुयपुरीहाटकनि
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An appraisal on concept of Sharir Srotas in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT: Srotas are formed by Akasha mahabhuta and these are the channels in the form of tracts, veins, arteries etc. used to carry and transport food, Doshas, Dhatu and Malas. Mula of Srotas is anatomical base of the respective Srotas, the main seat of pathology of that channel (Srotas) or the principal seat of manifestation of disease. According to Acharya Charaka, Srotas are Aparisankhyeya in the body and he has classified Srotas into 13 types whereas Acharya Sushruta has classified 11 pairs of Srotas. Srotas can be classified on different basis Manifestation of a disease in the body as a result of the defective Srotas favoring the Dosha-Dushya sammurchhana. At the site of interaction, the process of disease initiates.

Keywords: Srotas Doshas, Dhatu, Disease, Mula, Channel.

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Introduction:

There are various pathways within the human body which communicates and links the different corners. These pathways help in manufacture and transportation of essential ingredients and support the life entity, the basic amenities needed to manufacture and create the tissues of the body and to flush out the unnecessary things out of the body. The healthy existence and proper functioning of these pathways defines our existence, health and immunity status. The pathways, when get blocked, choked, or contaminated leads to serious damages, diseases and also death. Millions of ducts, tubes and channels are present in body which make what we are, which keeps us connected to the interior and exterior worlds, which connects us to selves, which binds the body, mind, senses and soul under one roof, which makes and breaks us, which phenomenally carry out all the life activities and functions effortlessly and selflessly, they are called 'Srotas'.¹

Srotas are also called as 'Kha' derived from Sanskrit word *Akasa* which indicate empty space. These are the channels in the form of tracts, veins, arteries etc. They carry and transport four types of food, *Dhatu*,

Doshas and *Malas*.² *Dhatu* sustains the body and nourishes the successive *Dhatu* only when digested full by its *Agni* and transported properly through its channel. Thus Srotas play important role in *Dhatupaka* (metabolism).

Etymology:

The word 'Srotas' is derived from 'Sru' which means oozing. The oozing of nourishing fluid and the return of waste matters take place through these Srotas.³

Historical aspects

According to the Mahaprajnaparamitasastra of Mahayana branch of Buddhism, Srotas refers to the "stream" (noble eightfold Path) and through these streams one can enter into the stream of Nirvana.

In Jain text Tattvarthasutra, Srotas word is mentioned to be derived from *Srotendriya* which refers to one of the "five sense-organs".

The different names or synonyms of all the visible and invisible srotases available in the body are Sira, Dhamani, Rasaayana, Rasa vaahini, Naadi, Shareera chidraani, Samvruta-asamvruta Sthaana, Aashaya, etc.⁴

Types of Srotas

According to Acharya Charaka, Srotas are Aparisankhyeya in the body and he has classified Srotas into 13

types whereas Acharya Sushruta has classified 11 pairs of Srotas. Srotas can be classified on different basis:⁵

- In Sharir sthana and Ashtang Hridaya, Srotamsi are classified on the basis of number
 1. Suksma (innumerable)
 2. Sthula (numerable).
- On the basis of perceptibility
 1. Drushya (perceptible)
 2. Aadrushya (imperceptible)
- On the basis of Adhishthana
 1. Sharirika
 2. Manasika
- On the basis of Sthanabheda
 1. Bahirmukha (outside opening)- 9 in male, 11 in female
 - ✓ 2 Akshi (eyes)
 - ✓ 2 Nasika (nose)
 - ✓ 2 Karna (ears)
 - ✓ 1 Mukha (oral cavity)
 - ✓ 1 Guda randhra,
 - ✓ 1 Vedana randhra.

(In females - 2 Stana randhra and 1 Rakthapatha)
 2. Antarmukha (inside opening)- 13

According to Charaka, there are 13 main Antarmukha Srotas.

They are:

Pranavaha Srotas – Channels carrying the vital life element or air

Annavaaha Srotas – Channels transporting food

Udakavaha Srotas – Channels carrying

water and controlling water metabolism

Rasavaha srotas – Channels carrying the nutritional essence

Raktavaha Srotas – Channels carrying the blood

Mamsavaha srotas – Channels carrying muscle tissue

Medovaha Srotas – Channels carrying fat tissue

Asthivaha Srotas – Channels transporting the bone tissue

Majjavaha Srotas – Channels carrying the bone marrow tissue

Shukravaha Srotas – Channels carrying the semen or reproductive tissue

Mutravaha srotas – Channels carrying urine out of the body

Purishavaha Srotas – Channels carrying stools out of the body

Swedavaha Srotas – Channels carrying the sweat

Detailed view of Srotas

Ayurveda believes that everything in this universe is made up of five basic elements termed as Panchmahabhuta. Akasha is considered as the basic Mahabhuta responsible for the presence of spaces in the body such as inter and intramolecular space; various channels, etc. Srotas are considered to be formed by Akasha mahabhuta, because they

show characteristics such as porous, clean, softness, thin, colourlessness and transparent.⁶ Srotas can be found all the way from the root to the tip of any building or body. Srotas are found within the body's gaps; they spread throughout the body and transport vital elements. Siras (veins, lymphatics, etc.) and Dhamani structures are completely separate from Srotas. Srotas possess the hue of the Dhatu (tissue) that they are carrying or transporting. They have variety of forms and sizes, including round, thick, huge, tiny, microscopic, and elongated, and they create a network and branches. Because the transportation process happens both within the cell and between cells, each cell may be called a Srotas according to this definition. Acharya Sushruta has described Srotas as continuous channel (blood vessels) which forms a closed tubular system, originating from a vacant space, spreads throughout the body, carries materials Rasa, Rakta etc. Sushruta has excluded Sira and Dhamani from the Srotas and compared the Srotas to the fine channels present in the lotus stem through which fluids circulate. Dalhana has accepted that all structures through which Prana, Anna, Rakta circulate as Srotas.

Srotas Mula Sthana:

According to Acharya Charak the term Mula implies Aadhar (base). In Sushruta Samhita Mula word is used to represent. The commentator of Charaka Samhita, Chakrapanidatta has quoted "Mulamiti Prabhava Sthanam" which means that Mula is the Prabhava sthana of the Srota. It is the anatomical seat of the respective Srotas, the main seat of the Dushti (pathology) of that Srota, the principal seat of manifestation of disease. Srota mulasthan is the area from which Srotas evolves or arises. He has compared Mulasthan with the root of the tree. Roots are the originating point; they nourish the tree and provide it support. If the root is destroyed, it will cause harm to the whole tree; in the same manner, if harm is caused to Srotomula, it will cause damage to whole Srotas.⁷

Importance of Srotas:

- All Srotas are transporters of body materials, which are under the process of bioconversion. Srotas serves as Ayanmukhas to both the Mala and Prasada part of Dhatu.⁸
- The concerned Srotas regulate what kind of Parthiva dravya should be allowed to pass through their Ayanmukhas.

- Ahararasa circulates through different channels in the entire body. This fluid reaches every Srotas and supplies required material for that part of Dhatu.
- Srotas carry Dhatu during process of metabolism i.e., one Dhatu gets transformed into another Dhatu in srotas.
- Poshana or nourishment of Sthayidhatu is one of the main function of Srotas.

➤ **Srotovaigunya**

Srotas perform function of the transmission of materials from one side to the other. The nutrient substances which nourish the Dhatus undergo Paka by the Ushma (Agni) of Dhatus. This kind of Agnivyapara and Paka takes place at the level of Dhatuvaha srotas. The impairment of Agni may, lead to Srotovaigunya which hamper the normal function of Srotas. The Doshas get vitiated and they interact with Dushyas of the affected region. This phenomenon is called as Dosha-Dushya sammurchana. At the site of interaction, the process of disease initiates. According to Sushruta, fourth stage of Shatkriyaka is due to Khavaigunya or srotovaigunya. Thus, all pathologies of acute or chronic nature have their beginning at the level of Srotas.⁹

Discussion:

Acharya Chakrapani mention about Sravarnat as Sravanam of Rasadi Poshya Dhatu. According to him, Srotas are the channels or systems where some tissue is formed; some material is metabolized, secreted or transported. Acharya Dalhana stated that all visible and invisible structures, possessing qualities of Akash mahabhoota are Srotas. They transport the Dhatus, Upadhatus, Anna, Jala, Prana Malas, etc. from one place to another in the body. Thirteen main channels are described, seven for seven dhatu, three for mala and two for intake of nutrient substances like food, water, air and one for regulation of water. Mula as Prabhav sthana means the anatomical seat of respective Srotas, main seat of pathology of that Srotas or principal seat of manifestation of the diseases of that Srotas.¹⁰ The cause of morbidity of Srotas and their manifestations first strikes the Mulasthanas of the respective Srotas. This morbidity slowly spreads throughout the body.

Conclusion:

Srotas means the structures through which circulation of Poshaka dhatu (nutrients) takes place in body. Srotas are continuous channel which forms a closed tubular system, originating from a vacant space (mulat

khadhantaram) and transport materials like Prana (Life element), Anna (Food), Vari (Water), Mamsa, Meda Dhathu, etc. The living body is the result of aggregation of innumerable 'Srotamsi', that are transporters of factors which causes Prakopa (excitation) or Shamana (allevation) of Sharira doshas. Srotas are concerned with the metabolic state of their corresponding tissues through different communicating mechanisms.

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