



PHYSIOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF SROTAS: A REVIEW ARTICLE

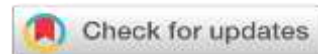
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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda provides several approaches to the diagnosis of diseases, which should be explained in the contemporary context. *Srotas* is one of the *Ayurvedic* terminologies and is a basic element of *Ayurveda*, as the whole body is made up of millions of *Srotases*. When vitiation or block occurs in the transport system of the human body, the Stagnation of unwanted thing, depletion of nutrition, destruction of tissues, and imbalances of mind and body is caused. A medical practitioner with sufficient knowledge of *Srotas* can be efficient in aborting diseases. This is because mastery of the physiology of the human body and pathology is one of the keys to success in disease treatment. *Maharsi Charak* explained *Srotas* from a medicinal perspective while *Sushruta* offered a surgical aspect. It will be beneficial to *Ayurvedic* students to clarify their understanding of *Srotas*.

Keywords: *Srotas, Dosha, Dhatu, Agni*

INTRODUCTION

The word *Srotas* originated from the Sanskrit root- ‘*Sru*’ (*Sru+tasi= Srotas*) which means exude, ooze, filter, permeate, and so on. *Srotas* not only play a vital role in the manifestation of the disease but also are

a prerequisite to maintaining basic physiological functions of the human body. Therefore, *Srotas* has been an important part of most *Ayurvedic* texts. To approach a patient in a holistic way, knowledge of

Srotas is a must for *Ayurvedic* physicians. The defective *Srotas* reflect the symptoms of diseases. Thus, abnormalities in *Srotas* must be corrected timely to restore a diseased body to normal condition. Without healthy *Srotas*, systems in the human body cannot operate properly. Any structural or functional minor disturbance of *Srotas* leads to the *Sammurchana* of *Dushya* and *Dosha*. Because of incompetent *Srotas*, the disease is manifested inside the body. The body can be healthy only until the channels of circulations perform their normal functions. To prevent the recurrence of disease, a conceptual understanding of *Srotas* is necessary which helps in adopting appropriate therapeutics and also to know about the prognosis, and to improve immunity. *Ayurveda* has accepted the human body to be made up of innumerable *Srotas* (channels) which are responsible for performing all the physiological and functional activities. All *dosha*, *dhathu*, and *mala* perform their functional activities with the help of these *Srotas*. It has been a practice for a long, to recognize all the *Vyadhi Laskhana*.

The body is divided into small units depending upon its chief function or structure. Each unit comprises many *Avayavas* (Organs), and each organ is made up of innumerable *Srotas*. Hence these units are generally called *Srotas*. *Ayurveda* is the first medical system to announce and describe the existence of innumerable *Srotas*, within the human body. The term *Srotas* is derived from the root “*Susravana*” meaning to exude, to ooze, to flow, to filter. Those from which *Sra-vana* or flow of the body substances takes place or those through which the materials flow in the body are called *Srotas*. Thus, they are the channels or pathways of the body through which the materials needed for tissue building, nutrition and other nutrients flow from one corner of the body to the other. In other words, materials are transported through these *Srotas* from the place of production to the place of need.

Characteristics of *Srotas*:

Srotas are defined as the channels through which the regular conduction of the nutrients for the nourishment and production of *Dhatu* takes place. The vitiation, depletion, and maintenance of existing bodily

structures i.e., *Dhatu* are never possible without *Srotas*. *Maharshi Susruta* and *Vagbhaṭa* both have compared *Srotas* to the very fine passages and pores present in the lotus stem, through which *Rasadipoṣya Dhatu* circulates all over the body and provide nutrition to the body. Blood flow through *Sira*, *Dhamani*, and *Naḍi*, to provide nutrition to every cell and collect wastes from it, so *Maharshi Charaka* has included these words in place of the synonym of *Srotas*. *Maharshi Charaka* has given many words for the *Srotas* that all indicate macro and micro channels and pathways operating in the living body. Following are the synonyms-*Sira* (vein), *Dhamani* (Arteries), *Rasayani* (lymphatics), *Rasvahini* (capillaries), *Naḍi* (Ducts), *Pantha* (passages), *Marga* (Tracts), *Sarirachidraṇi* (openings), *Samvrita-asamvrita* (open and blind passages), *Sthāna*(Sites, locus), *Āśayas* (Spaces), *Niketa* (Resorts), *Śarīradhātāvākṣlakṣhaṇa-alakṣhaṇa* (Visible and invisible spaces in the tissues and their cells).¹ *Srotāmsi* is derived from the 'Sru Gatau' word + *Sruribhyam Sut* + *Cha*. Its meaning is to flow, to move.² It stands for channels and meatus openings through which the constant flowing process occurs. *Srotāmsi* of the body comprise of

1. *Sūkshma* (Subtle) - Innumerable - As f channels of different kinds. They may be classified as many as the life factor operating in the life process.
2. *Sthūla* (Gross) - Numerable – *Bahirmukha* (Aperture or natural opening) - 9 in male and 11 in female.

Maharshi Charaka has defined the following features of the *Srotas*.³

*Colour- The colour of *Srotas* is that of *Dhātu* they carry.

*Size - *Aṇu* (Atomic in size or microscopic), *Sthūla* (Gross or macroscopic).

*Shape – *Vṛtta* (cylindrical), *Dīrgha* (long), *Pratāna* (reticulated).

The function of *Srotas*:

- 1) *Grahana* or *sangrahana*: Storage or collection
- 2) *Sravana*: secretes, oozing, discharge, exudates
- 3) *Vahana*: carry, conduction, transportation
- 4) *Shoshana*: Absorption, Assimilation
- 5) *Nissarana*: Elimination or excretion

- 6) Pachana: Digestion
- 7) Vivechana: Selectivity
- 8) Receptable
- 9) Diffusion
- 10) Permeation

- All the body structural entities originated from *Srotas*.⁴
- *Srotas* maintain the structural entities of the body and prevent there diminish.
- *Acharyas* described that the entire range of life processes in health and disease depends on the integrity of *Srotas*.⁵
- They carry sensory and motor impulses to the body.⁶
- *Srotas* carry *Dhatu* (tissues, elements, or their constituents) undergoing transformation to their destination.⁷
- ❖ *Srotas* serve as the conduct units for the *Prasada Dhatu* as well as *Mala Dhatu* are transported, and the formation of *Sthāyī Dhātu*.
- ❖ *Srotas* are not only passages or channels for the flow of various substances but also *Srotas* are in specific their functions. Each *Srotas* provides nutrition to their respective *Dhātu*, only with requisite quantities, not others.
- ❖ *Srotas* are the inner transport system of the body that provides basic for activities of other important bio-factors like the three *Doṣha*, the seven *Dhātu*, the *Oja*, the *Agni*, thoughts, and emotions.⁸ All the *Doṣha*, *Dhātu*, and *Mala* are dependent on *Srotas* for their formation, transportation, and destruction.

Characteristics of *Srotodushti*

The characteristics of the morbidity of the body channels are the increased or decreased flow of their contents, knotted condition of the passages, or flow of their contents in abnormal channels.

1. *Atiprvrutti*

The term *Atiprvrutti* means excessive flow. When the *Srotas* gets vitiated due to *Dosha*, it may lead to functional deformity which causes *Atiprvrutti*. E.g., in *prameha* due to *Medovaha Srotodushti*, there is *Bahumutrata* (excessive passage of urine).

2. *Sanga*

Sanga means obstruction/retention or holding up. Due to vitiated *Dosha*, *Srotas* gets affected functionally. It cannot perform its routine function of *Sra-vanam*/transport. The flow is obstructed and leads to the diseased condition. E.g., In the case of *Mutrakruchha*, there is an obstruction in the passage of voiding urine, so there is retention or dribbling micturition.

3. *Sira-Granthi*

It means dilatation of veins causing obstruction to normal flow through *Srotas*. E.g., Atherosclerosis is a condition in which plaque builds up inside arteries, which causes obstruction to the flow of blood.

4. *Vimarga Gamana*

Due to some pathology, at the level of *Srotas*, there is the flow of fluid in the affected area through channels other than its own. E.g., according to *Jwaravyadhi Samprapti*, *Udakavaha* and *Sweadavaha srotas* are obstructed and vitiated *doshas* cause *Srotodushti*, *Agni* gets out of its original place and resides in *Twaka* causing *Jwara*.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda has given importance to *Srotas* for every *Murthiman Bhavas*. *Srotas* are the channels different from *Sira* and *Dhamani*, which carries nutrients to the body organs and are wide spreads all over the body. It also carries waste materials for excretion from the body. Without *Srotas*, the physiological functions of the human body will not be possible. Every *Srotas* has two *Moolasthanas* and the function of these *Moolasthanas* is to produce the elements which flow through the *Srotas*. If *Moolasthanas* are defective, the *Srotas* will be defective. But if *srotas* are defective, does not mean that *Moolasthanas* will also be defective. Pathological changes in the body are due to *Sroto Dushti*, *Srotosanga*. Any imbalance in the *Srotas* causes disease, so for the proper development of the human body, proper functioning of the *Srotas* is a must.

CONCLUSION

The present article emphasizes on a proper understanding of the concept of *Srotas* in a systematic manner,

to understand functions carried out by *Srotas* in physiological conditions, its *Mulasthanas*, causes of *Srotodusti*, its characteristics, and its clinical importance of *Srotas*. The role of *Srotas* in the manifestation of the disease is well discussed in almost all *Ayurvedic* texts; so also, its importance in the maintenance of normal physiological functions, that is, the basis for good health. *The ayurvedic* physician must have complete knowledge of *Srotas*, to approach a patient in a holistic way. Clinically at the stage of *Srotovai-gunya*, symptoms of the disease are almost on the way to their appearance. According to symptoms, we can get an idea about the site of the disease, and accordingly, by treating the vitiated *doshas* present in the *Moolasthanas*, there is complete management of a disease from its root.

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