



Review Article

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AN APPLIED ANATOMICAL STUDY OF *PURISHVAHA SROTAS* AND ITS MOOLA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is one of the world's oldest holistic (whole body) healing therapies. It was developed thousands of years ago in India. *Ayurvedic* medicine is an ancient system of health care. *Srotas* is unique concept of fundamental structures available in *Ayurveda* without which one cannot survive. It is one of the basic developmental units for keeping the body fit. According to *Ayurveda* the function of *Purisha* is to support (*Upastambh*)

Sharir and *Dharan* of *Agni* and *Vata*. Keeping in mind the importance of *Purisha* and *Sharir* it is important to know *Purishvaha Srotas* in anatomical aspect. The applied anatomy of *Purish Vaha Srotas* is very well described in *Ayurvedic* classics in a scattered manner in *Kshudra roga*, stricture of anus "*Sannirudhaguda*", *Arsha* or hemorrhoids, *bhagander* or fistula in ano and *Guda Vidhradhi* etc are the conditions related with the vitiation of *Purishvaha Srotas*. In present scenario sedentary life style, abrupt quality and timing of diet leads to disturbance in anatomy of *Purishvaha Srotas* causing several type of anorectal disorders. The approach in the present work has been to review all the conceptual aspect of *Purishvaha Srotas* along with its applied aspect

KEYWORDS -*Purishavaha Srotas*, *Moola Srotas*, Applied Anatomy, Anorectal Disorders, Ayurvedic Physiology, *Pakvashaya* and *Guda*

INTRODUCTION

According to *Ayurveda*, *Sharir* is constituted of *Dosha*, *Dhatu* & *Mala* in living state¹. This life sustaining constituents i.e., *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* travels through the '*Srotamsi*' and provided to whole of the body for survival of life. *Srotas* is unique concept of fundamental structures available in *Ayurveda* without which one cannot survive. It is one of the basic developmental units for keeping the body fit. In case, it is not properly developed or has any pathology, it is considered as the cause of the disease. The knowledge of *Srotas* may help to achieve better health and medical care.

Many schools of *Ayurveda* have perceived the knowledge of *Srotas* from different angles. *Acharya Charak* has highlighted a basic characteristic of *Srotas* i.e., colorless structure which transmits color of contents of *dhatu* presents in conduit and bear '*Ayanmukha*' for exchange². But *Acharya Sushruta* has differentiated it from *Sira* and *Dhamani*³. These three structures *Sira*, *Dhamani* and *Srotas* collectively form the 'system of transportation'. The difference among them is that *Dhamani* is designed for '*Dhaman karma*' (with pulsation), *Sira* for '*Saran karma*' (without pulsation) and *Srotas* for '*Srawana karma*' (neutral pressure)⁴.

Thus, health depends upon the equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*⁵. These are under the influence of *Aahar*, *Vihar* and *Prakriti*. The *Malakriya* and transportation of *Doshas* solely depends upon intactness of *Srotas*. If these *Srotas* are clear or normal, the body is not inflicted with any disorder.

If there is any obstructive lesion in Srotas, it gives rise to pathogenesis. Thus, the patency and impatency of Srotas is the condition of health and disease accordingly. Hence the importance of Srotas is very much obvious in physio- pathological developments and maintenance of health.

In classical *Ayurvedic* literature there are two types of diseases described. One is the diseases which are in *Amasaya* i.e. "*Amasayasth*" another which are located in *Pakvasaya* i.e. "*Pakvasaysth*"⁶. In addition to this doctrine of *Kayachikitsa* also believes that *Vastichikitsa* is *Ardhchikitsa* of all *Vyadhi* because in any type of *Vyadhi* the *Vata* dosha is prominent one and the *Vata Dosha* is in *Pakvasaya* which is described as *Moola* of *Purishvaha Srotas*⁷. *Guda* is also one of the *Srotomoola* of *Purishvaha Srotas* which is very common site of several ano-rectal disorders⁸. The applied anatomy of *Purishvaha Srotas* is very well described in *Ayurvedic* classics in a scattered manner in *Kshudra roga*, stricture of anus "*Sannirudhaguda*", *Arsha* or haemorrhoids, *Bhagander* or fistula in ano and *Guda Vidhradhi* etc are the conditions related with the vitiation of *Purishvaha Srotas*. In present scenario sedentary life style, abrupt quality and timing of diet leads to disturbance in anatomy of *Purishvaha Srotas* causing several type of anorectal disorders. The approach in the present work has been to review all the conceptual aspect of *Purishvaha srotas* along with its applied aspect.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

- To study appropriate and descriptive literature of *Purishvaha Srotas* and its *Moola*
- To study the anatomical structure of *Purishvaha Srotas* and its *Moola* with modern view point.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

For the present study, an in-depth literary review was conducted focusing on classical *Ayurvedic* texts including the *Brihatrayi* (Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya) and *Laghutrayi* (Sharangadhara Samhita, Bhavaprakasha, Madhava Nidana). Relevant *Srotas*-related references were critically examined to extract the conceptual framework of *Purishavaha Srotas* and its *Moola*. Modern anatomical correlation was established using contemporary medical literature, anatomical textbooks, and research publications. The aim was to integrate traditional knowledge with applied anatomical understanding, specifically to explore the anatomical components of *Purishavaha Srotas*,

their physiological roles, and their involvement in pathologies such as constipation, hemorrhoids, fistula, and rectal prolapse.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY

The concept of *Srotas* forms a fundamental pillar in *Ayurvedic Sharira Rachana* (anatomy) and *Kriya Sharira* (physiology). *Srotas* are defined as the channels or pathways in the body through which *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala* are transported, transformed, and eliminated. Among them, *Purishavaha Srotas* is the system responsible for the transportation and expulsion of *Purisha* (faeces), one of the three principal *Mala* (waste products), playing a critical role in health and disease.

Definition and Meaning

- The word *Purisha* refers to solid waste or faecal matter. (*Vaha* means to carry)
- *Srotas* means channels or pathways. Thus, *Purishavaha Srotas* are defined as those internal channels or passages responsible for the carriage and expulsion of *Purisha*.

Classical References and Terminology

- According to Acharya Charaka, the *Moola* (root) of *Purishavaha Srotas* is *Pakvashaya* (colon) and *Sthulaguda* (lower rectum/anal canal). (*Ch. Vi. 5/3*)
- Acharya Sushruta describes *Pakvashaya* and *Guda* as its *Srotomoola*. (*Su. Sha. 9/20*)
- Acharya Vagbhata elaborates it as *Pakvashaya* and *Sthulantra* (descending and sigmoid colon). (*A.S. Su. 1/31*)

Anatomical Structure According to Ayurveda

The passage through which *Purisha* moves and is eliminated includes:

- *Unduka* (Ileocecal junction)
- *Aarohi Bhaga* (Ascending colon)
- *Anuprastha Bhaga* (Transverse colon)
- *Avarohi Bhaga* (Descending colon)
- *Kundalika* (Sigmoid colon)
- *Uttarguda* (Rectum)
- *Adharguda* (Anal canal)

These structures collectively form the *Purishavaha Srotas* from the point of absorption of fluid from digested food to the final expulsion of fecal matter.

Physiological Role - The primary function of *Purishavaha Srotas* is the excretion of *Purisha*, which helps in maintaining internal cleanliness and homeostasis. It absorbs excess fluid from the *Ahara Rasa* (nutrient part of digested food) and consolidates the residual into *Purisha*. It aids in the expulsion of waste along with *Vata*, particularly *Apana Vata*, which governs downward elimination processes.

Formation of *Purisha*

The final stage of digestion known as *Katu Paaka* occurs in the *Pakvashaya*. Here: The liquid part (*Sara*) is absorbed. The solid waste (*Kitta*) is converted into a fecal lump (*Purisha*). Bacterial action and *Vata* (mainly *Apana Vata*) help in the formation of flatus.

Acharya Charaka mentions various *Nidanas* (causative factors) such as:

- *Vegadharana* (suppression of natural urges)
- *Ajeerna Bhojana* (eating during indigestion)
- *Atibhojana* (overeating)
- *Agnimandya* (weak digestive fire)

These lead to:

- *Purisha Alpa Pravritti* – scanty fecal output
- *Purisha Ati Pravritti* – excess fecal output
- *Purisha Mridu* – too soft/liquid stools
- *Purisha Kathina* – hard stools
- *Shabda Yukta Malotsarga* – noisy defecation
- *Shoola Yukta Malotsarga* – painful defecation

Concept of *Srotoviddha*

Acharya Sushruta explains that injury to the *Srotomoola* (rectum and colon) causes: *Adhmana* (abdominal distension), *Durgandhi Malotsarga* (foul-smelling feces), *Granthita Mala Pravritti* (hard, lumpy stools). These resemble conditions like trauma, stricture, or obstruction of the large intestine in modern anatomy.

Pathological Conditions Associated

Diseases due to *Purishavaha Srotas Dushti* include:

- *Arsha* (Hemorrhoids)
- *Bhagandara* (Fistula in ano)
- *Sanniruddha Guda* (Anal stricture)
- *Vidradhi* (Anorectal abscess)
- *Grahani* (Malabsorption syndrome)
- *Udavarta* (Reverse movement of Vata due to fecal retention)

RESULT AND FINDINGS

1. *Purishavaha Srotas* consists of *Pakvashaya* (colon) and *Guda* (rectum and anal canal) which are responsible for the formation, storage, and expulsion of feces.
2. Acharya Charaka identified *Pakvashaya* and *Sthulaguda* as the *Srotomoola*, while Acharya Sushruta mentioned *Pakvashaya* and *Guda*, and Acharya Vagbhata added *Sthulantra* (descending colon) to the anatomical description.
3. Vitiation of *Purishavaha Srotas* is associated with diseases like *Arsha* (hemorrhoids), *Bhagandara* (fistula in ano), *Sanniruddha Guda* (anal stricture), and *Guda Vidradhi* (anorectal abscess).
4. Suppression of natural urges, irregular eating habits, sedentary lifestyle, low digestive fire (*Mandagni*), and improper food intake are major causes of *Srotodushti*.
5. Symptoms of vitiated *Purishavaha Srotas* include constipation, painful or difficult defecation, altered stool consistency (too liquid or too hard), foul smell, and abdominal distension.
6. Modern anatomical correlation confirms that the described regions match the large intestine including the ileocecal junction, ascending colon, transverse colon, descending colon, sigmoid colon, rectum, and anal canal.
7. Applied anatomical understanding of *Purishavaha Srotas* aids in diagnosis, management, and surgical intervention of anorectal disorders using both *Ayurvedic* and modern medical approaches.

DISCUSSION

The area and passage where the *Purish* remain and passes through in the body are termed as *Purishvaha Srotas*. Physiologically *Purishvaha Srotas* contains two parts. First part where the *Purish* is formed called as *Pakvashaya* (colon) and second, is the part where the formed *Purish* is expelled out is called as *Guda* or *Sthulguda* (rectum)⁹. To describe the vitiation of *Purishvaha Srotas* in *Nija* type of disease; *Acharya Charak* has described the *Srotomoola* of *Purish Vaha Srotas*, as *Pakvashaya* (Colon) and *Sthula Guda* (rectum)¹⁰ and *Acharya Vagbhatt* has described the *Purishvaha Srotomoola* as *Pakvashaya* (iliocaecal opening *Pakvashaya Dwar* to the splenic flexure of Transverse colon proximal colon - proximal colon or absorbing colon) and *Sthul-Antra* (descending colon to the sigmoid colon descending colon-distal colon or storage colon)¹¹. Whereas to define the vitiation of *Purishvaha Srotas* in *Aagantuja* type of disease, *Acharya Sushrut* has described the *Srotomoola* of *Purishvaha Srotas* as, *Pakvashaya* (colon) and *Guda* (rectum)¹².

Because of *Nidan* and symptomatology of *Purishvaha Sroto Dushti*, *Acharya Charak* has described it as the suppression of urges, over eating, eating during indigestion, poor digestion or *Mandagni* in lean and thin person, are the *Nidan* of *Purishvaha Srotodusti*. He has also given the *Srotodusti* symptom of *Purishvaha Srotas* as, passing faeces with difficulty in small quantity with sound and pain, too liquid, too sabulous and large quantity of faeces is evacuated¹³.

Acharya Sushrut has described *Srotoviddha* symptom that is originated by operated injury on *Srotomoola* of *Purishvaha Srotas* as distension of abdomen, bad odour (in faeces) and *Granthita*¹⁴.

The large intestine extends from the ileum to the anus. It is divided into caecum, the appendix, the ascending colon, the transverse colon, the descending colon, the sigmoid colon, the rectum and anal canal are considered as *purishavaha Srota*. The primary function of large intestine is the absorption of water and electrolyte and the storage of undigested material until it can be expelled from the body as faeces. The system where *Purish* remains and passes through the body are termed as *Purishvaha Srotas*. The *Purishvaha Srotas* in the body mainly involved *Pakvashaya* and its different parts, starting from the *Unduka* (ileocaecal region) to external orifice of the rectum, (anus) contain few parts- *Unduka*, *Aarohi bhaga* (ascending colon), *Anuprastha Bhaga* (transverse colon), *Avarohi Bhaga* (descending colon), *Kundalika* (sigmoid colon), *Uttarguda* (rectum) and *Adharguda* (anal canal). *Adharguda* can be explained as *Guda Marma* (*Sadhypranhara marma*)¹⁵.

On the basis of whole description of *Srotomoola* of *Purishvaha Srotas*, it can be explained as: one portion is used for the formation of *Purisha* (pakvashaya) and other portion is used to help in defecation by receiving the defecation signals from rectum (*Sthoolantra*) to be used in initiation of defecation reflex *Guda* and *Sthoolaguda*. So it can be concluded that one portion of *Purishvaha Srotas* is involved in the formation of *Purish* and other portion is involved in defaecation process for the expulsion of flatus and faeces. When these *Moolas* are vitiated in *Nija* type of *Vyadhi* or *Agantuja* type of disease, then the origination of respective symptom *Srotodusti* or *Srotoviddha* characters is presented on clinical ground.

Acharya Charak has explained the symptom of *Srotodusti* of *Purishvaha Srotas* in reference to applied anatomy as, passing faeces with difficulty in small quantity with sound and pain, too liquid, too scabulous and large quantity of faeces is evacuated. The symptom of *Purishvaha Srotodusti*, is related to genetic and infective cause, to inflammation of colon or colitis whereas functional cause (imbalanced *Ahara Vihar*) is related to change in neurohormonal function of colon¹⁶.

According to *Acharya Sushrut* applied anatomy of the *Srotoviddha* symptom and sign of *Purishvaha Srotas* is distension of abdomen, bad odour in faeces and *Grathiantrata*. These symptoms are explained by *Ghanekar* as due to injury operated on *Purishvaha Srotomoola*¹⁷, the constipation appears, later on retention of stool is developed and cessation of flatus takes place. This retained accumulated feces and its regular absorption changes it into fecolith. Due to fermentation process in accumulated feces, bad odour is produced in the feces. So excessive gas (due to fermentation process in feces and swallowed air), intestinal secretion and accumulated feces, all of them together cause abdominal distension. In terms of modern science, trauma on large intestine, the pathological features range from hematoma (intramural) to full thick laceration when not repaired lead to perforation and peritonitis. The clinical symptom depends on causes of trauma and it is related to the size of formed intramural hematoma and processes of inflammation which later on produce stricture. The above factors cause the intestinal obstruction and produces clinical symptom as, absolute constipation, abdominal distension and abdominal colic. So the *Srotoviddha* symptoms of *Purishvaha srotas* can be explained on medical and clinical grounds as, intestinal obstruction originated by injury of a particular force of intensity (intensity of trauma) in reference to applied anatomy. The morbidity of *Purish* in *Samhita Granthas*, is explained as *Purish Vridhi* and *Purish Kshaya*. The symptoms of *Purish Pridhi* are related to, increase in dietary roughage

in feces which form the 30% bulk of feces and the symptom of *Purish Kshaya* is related to, decrease in dietary roughage in feces.

CONCLUSION

The term *Purish* is the faecal matter in the body, when present in equal quantity (*Samana state*), causes health and unequal state (*Visamata*) causes disease. When chronic disease occurs, the body tissues have decayed. '*Vitta mala*' is the only media to maintain the strength of the body. Different *Ayurvedic Acharya* have shown their attention towards the *Purish*, *Vayu* and *Agni*, which are regarded to maintain the body. The digestive process, which is performed in the *Maha Srotas* is called as *Avasthapaka*. It is divided into three parts that is *Madhur Paaka*, *Amla Paaka* and *Kattu Paaka*. The *Purishvaha Srotas* is the lower part of *Maha Srotas* where *Kattu Paka* occurs. When digested food is entered in the *Pakvashaya*, the absorption of fluid from the residual parts (*Kitta*) part of digested food is established. Afterwards it is converted into solid mass or lump form known as *Vitta* or *Purish*. Due to predominance of pungency (*Katuta*), *Vayu* (flatus due to bacterial action on fecal matter), is formed as by product. This work is the herculean task to understand the diseases related to *Purushvaha Srotodushti* and *Vidhha Lakshanas* by applied anatomical study for managing vitiation by physician and surgeon. It needs further probing for the diagnosis, prognosis, and surgical intervention in further prospective.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST -NIL

SOURCE OF SUPPORT -NONE

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