

Review Article

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ROLE OF KAYACHIKITSA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ANNAVAHA AND PURISHAVAHA SROTAS DISORDERS

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ABSTRACT

Disorders of *Annavaha Srotas* and *Purishavaha Srotas* are among the most frequently encountered clinical conditions in day-to-day practice, presenting with symptoms such as *Agnimandya*, *Ajirna*, *Atisara*, *Grahani*, *Vibandha*, and abdominal discomfort. These conditions significantly disturb digestion, absorption, and excretion, thereby affecting overall health and quality of life. *Kayachikitsa*, being the core branch of internal medicine in *Ayurveda*, plays a central role in the prevention and management of these disorders through a holistic and individualized approach. The management principles of *Kayachikitsa* emphasize restoration of *Agni*, correction of *Dosha Vaishamya*, regulation of *Srotas Pravritti*, and elimination of accumulated *Ama*. Therapeutic modalities such as *Shodhana*, *Shamana*, *Ahara*, *Vihara*, and *Rasayana* are judiciously selected based on the involvement of *Dosha*, chronicity, and strength of the patient. This conceptual review highlights the role of *Kayachikitsa* in understanding the etiopathogenesis, clinical manifestations, and integrated management of *Annavaha* and *Purishavaha Srotas* disorders, while also drawing correlations with contemporary gastrointestinal disorders. The principles of *Kayachikitsa* offer a comprehensive, safe, and sustainable framework for managing digestive and bowel-related disorders with a focus on root-cause correction and long-term well-being.

Keywords: *Kayachikitsa*, *Annavaha Srotas*, *Purishavaha Srotas*, *Agni*, *Ama*, Gastrointestinal Disorders

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda views the human body as an integrated system where health depends on the balanced functioning of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, and *Agni*. Among these, proper digestion and excretion are considered the foundation of both physical strength and disease resistance. The channels responsible for these functions are described as *Annavaha Srotas* and *Purishavaha Srotas*, which play a crucial role in the intake, digestion, absorption, and elimination of food. Any disturbance in these *Srotas* directly affects nourishment of tissues and leads to the manifestation of systemic disorders.¹

Annavaha Srotas is primarily concerned with the reception and processing of food, while *Purishavaha Srotas* governs the formation, movement, and expulsion of fecal matter. Classical texts emphasize that impairment of these channels results in conditions such as *Agnimandya*, *Ajirna*, *Atisara*, *Grahani*, and *Vibandha*. These disorders are not isolated gastrointestinal problems but reflect deeper derangements of *Agni* and accumulation of *Ama*, which further act as the root cause of multiple chronic diseases.²

In the present era, irregular dietary habits, incompatible food combinations, psychological stress, sedentary lifestyle, and suppression of natural urges have significantly increased the prevalence of digestive and bowel-related disorders. From an *Ayurvedic* standpoint, these factors act as *Hetu* leading to *Srotodushti* of *Annavaha* and *Purishavaha Srotas*. Modern medicine also recognizes the growing burden of functional gastrointestinal disorders, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and preventive approach rather than symptom-based management alone.³

Kayachikitsa, the principal branch of internal medicine in *Ayurveda*, offers a structured and holistic approach to the management of *Annavaha* and *Purishavaha Srotas* disorders. It focuses not only on disease control but also on restoration of normal physiological function through correction of *Agni*, elimination of *Ama*, regulation of bowel habits, and strengthening of digestive capacity. Thus, understanding the role of *Kayachikitsa* in these disorders is essential for developing rational, effective, and sustainable treatment strategies aimed at long-term health maintenance.⁴

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

AIM

To study the role of *Kayachikitsa* in the understanding and management of disorders of *Annavaha Srotas* and *Purishavaha Srotas*.

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the *Ayurvedic* concept of *Annavaha Srotas* and *Purishavaha Srotas*.
2. To analyze the etiological factors and *Samprapti* of their disorders.
3. To review the principles of *Kayachikitsa* applied in their management.
4. To highlight the role of *Agni* and *Ama* in digestive and bowel-related disorders.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The present study was carried out as a conceptual and literary review based on a critical analysis of classical *Ayurvedic* texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, along with their authoritative commentaries, to collect references related to *Annavaha Srotas*, *Purishavaha Srotas*, and the principles of *Kayachikitsa*. Relevant information was systematically compiled on *Hetu*, *Lakshana*, *Samprapti*, and *Chikitsa Siddhanta* of these disorders and correlated with available modern literature on gastrointestinal physiology and disorders from standard textbooks and peer-reviewed journals to achieve a comprehensive understanding.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Annavaha Srotas

In *Ayurveda*, the concept of *Annavaha Srotas* is fundamental to understanding digestion and nourishment of the body. The term *Annavaha* denotes the channels responsible for the intake, transport, digestion, and initial processing of food. According to classical texts, *Annavaha Srotas* includes organs such as *Amashaya* and *Annavahi Dhamani*, which together facilitate reception and transformation of food into absorbable form. Proper functioning of these *Srotas* ensures maintenance of *Agni*, formation of healthy *Ahara Rasa*, and subsequent nourishment of *Dhatu*.⁵

Acharya *Charaka* has emphasized that *Annavaha Srotas* is closely related to the state of *Jatharagni*. When *Agni* is balanced, digestion remains proper, but impairment of *Agni* leads to disorders like *Agnimandya*, *Ajirna*, *Chardi*, *Aruchi*, and *Adhmana*. These conditions are described as manifestations of *Srotodushti* of *Annavaha Srotas*, primarily caused by improper dietary habits, excessive intake, incompatible food combinations, and mental factors such as stress and grief.⁶

Acharya *Sushruta* further elaborates that vitiation of *Dosha*, especially *Vata* and *Kapha*, plays a major role in the pathology of *Annavaha Srotas* disorders. Excessive dryness, heaviness, cold food, irregular eating patterns, and suppression of natural urges disturb the normal movement of *Vata*, leading to functional impairment of digestive organs. This ultimately results in improper digestion and accumulation of *Ama*, which acts as a toxic by-product and initiates disease processes.⁷

From a *Kayachikitsa* perspective, disorders of *Annavaha Srotas* are not limited to localized digestive symptoms but are considered the starting point of many systemic diseases. Classical literature clearly states that most diseases originate from impaired digestion. Therefore, assessment of *Annavaha Srotas* and correction of its dysfunction through restoration of *Agni*, removal of *Ama*, and regulation of dietary and lifestyle factors form the cornerstone of *Ayurvedic* management.⁸

S. No.	Name of <i>Srotas</i>	Mūlasthāna (Root)	Main Function
1	<i>Pranavaha Srotas</i>	<i>Hridaya, Mahāsrotas</i>	Respiration and life maintenance
2	<i>Udakavaha Srotas</i>	<i>Tālu, Kloma</i>	Regulation of body fluids and thirst
3	<i>Annavaha Srotas</i>	<i>Āmāśaya, Annavāhi Dhamani</i>	Intake and digestion of food
4	<i>Rasavaha Srotas</i>	<i>Hridaya, Rasavāhi Dhamani</i>	Circulation and nourishment of <i>Rasa Dhatu</i>
5	<i>Raktavaha Srotas</i>	<i>Yakrit, Pliha</i>	Formation and circulation of <i>Rakta Dhatu</i>
6	<i>Māmsavaha Srotas</i>	<i>Snāyu, Tvak</i>	Formation and maintenance of muscles
7	<i>Medovaha Srotas</i>	<i>Vṛkka, Vapāvahana</i>	Fat metabolism and lubrication
8	<i>Asthivaha Srotas</i>	<i>Meda, Jaghan</i>	Formation and nourishment of bones
9	<i>Majjavaha Srotas</i>	<i>Asthi, Sandhi</i>	Nourishment of marrow and nervous tissue
10	<i>Śukravaha Srotas</i>	<i>Vṛṣaṇa, Śēpha</i>	Reproduction and vitality
11	<i>Artavavaha Srotas</i>	<i>Garbhaśaya, Artavavāhi Dhamani</i>	Menstrual and reproductive function (female)

12	<i>Mutravaha Srotas</i>	<i>Basti, Vṛkka</i>	Formation and excretion of urine
13	<i>Purīṣavaha Srotas</i>	<i>Pakvāśaya, Guda</i>	Formation and elimination of feces
14	<i>Svedavaha Srotas</i>	<i>Tvak, Romakūpa</i>	Sweat formation and thermoregulation

PURISHAVAHA SROTAS DISORDERS

Purishavaha Srotas is the channel system responsible for the formation, transportation, storage, and elimination of *Purisha* which is an essential *Mala* of the body. Classical *Ayurvedic* texts describe its *Mulasthana* as *Pakwashaya* and *Guda*, highlighting its close association with digestion, absorption of fluids, and regulation of bowel movements. Proper functioning of *Purishavaha Srotas* maintains intestinal health, supports *Agni*, and contributes to lightness and comfort of the body.⁹

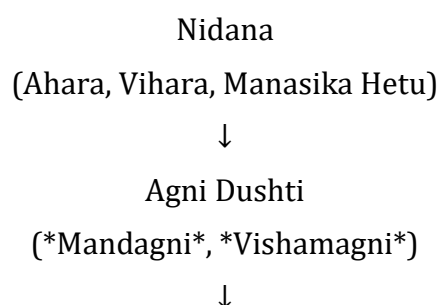
According to Acharya *Charaka* and *Sushruta*, vitiation of *Purishavaha Srotas* occurs due to factors such as irregular food intake, excessive consumption of dry, heavy, or incompatible foods, suppression of natural urges especially *Purishavega*, and mental stress. These causative factors disturb mainly *Vata Dosha*, leading to altered bowel habits. The classical manifestations of *Purishavaha Srotodushti* include *Atisara* (diarrhea), *Grahani*, *Vibandha* (constipation), *Anaha*, *Adhmana*, and painful defecation.¹⁰

Vata plays a dominant role in the physiology and pathology of *Purishavaha Srotas*. When *Apana Vata* is disturbed, the normal downward movement of fecal matter is impaired, resulting in either excessive elimination or obstruction. Chronic impairment leads to accumulation of *Ama*, dryness of intestinal walls, altered absorption, and weakness of digestive fire, thereby worsening the disease process and causing recurrence.¹¹

From the *Kayachikitsa* viewpoint, disorders of *Purishavaha Srotas* are managed by correcting *Apana Vata*, strengthening *Agni*, softening and regulating *Purisha*, and eliminating accumulated *Ama*. Classical literature emphasizes that regulation of bowel habits is essential not only for gastrointestinal health but also for preventing systemic disorders. Thus, understanding *Purishavaha Srotas* disorders forms a crucial component of holistic internal medicine in *Ayurveda*, with emphasis on root-cause correction and long-term balance.¹²

S. No.	Disease / Condition	Ayurvedic Term	Key Clinical Features
1	Diarrhea	<i>Atisara</i>	Frequent loose stools, dehydration, weakness
2	Malabsorption syndrome	<i>Grahani</i>	Irregular bowel habits, undigested stools, <i>Agnimandya</i>
3	Constipation	<i>Vibandha</i>	Hard stools, difficulty in defecation, abdominal heaviness
4	Abdominal distension	<i>Adhmana</i>	Gaseous distension, fullness, discomfort
5	Intestinal obstruction due to gas	<i>Anaha</i>	Retention of flatus and stool, pain, bloating
6	Painful defecation	<i>Purishakricchra</i>	Straining, pain during passage of stool
7	Hemorrhoids	<i>Arsha</i>	Bleeding or painful masses in anal region
8	Anal fissure	<i>Parikartika</i>	Cutting pain, burning sensation during defecation
9	Rectal prolapse	<i>Gudabhramsha</i>	Protrusion of rectal mucosa, weakness of anal region
10	Worm infestation	<i>Krimi</i> (intestinal type)	Itching, abdominal discomfort, altered stools
11	Tenesmus	<i>Pravahana</i>	Repeated urge to defecate with little output
12	Chronic constipation with dryness	<i>Pakvashaya Gata Vata</i>	Dry, hard stools, pain, cracking sensation

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RESULT AND FINDINGS

- Disorders of *Annavaha Srotas* were found to be primarily associated with derangement of *Agni* leading to *Ajirna*, *Agnimandya*, and *Ama* formation.

- Disorders of *Purishavaha Srotas* mainly manifested due to vitiation of *Apana Vata*, resulting in altered bowel habits such as *Atisara*, *Grahani*, and *Vibandha*.
- A close functional relationship was observed between *Annavaha* and *Purishavaha Srotas*, where impairment of digestion directly influenced bowel pathology.
- *Ama* played a central role in the pathogenesis of both *Annavaha* and *Purishavaha Srotas* disorders, acting as a common pathological factor.
- Principles of *Kayachikitsa* such as *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Agni Deepana*, and *Ama Pachana* were found to be fundamental in correcting *Srotodushti*.
- *Shodhana* therapies, especially *Virechana* and *Basti*, showed significant relevance in chronic and *Vata*-dominant conditions of *Purishavaha Srotas*.
- *Shamana Chikitsa* along with regulated *Ahara* and *Vihara* contributed to restoration of normal digestion and bowel regularity.
- *Rasayana* therapy was found beneficial in strengthening *Agni*, preventing recurrence, and maintaining long-term balance of *Annavaha* and *Purishavaha Srotas*.

DISCUSSION

The present review highlights that disorders of *Annavaha Srotas* primarily originate from impairment of *Agni*, which acts as the central regulator of digestion and metabolism. Faulty dietary habits, irregular meal timings, and incompatible food intake lead to *Agnidushti*, resulting in incomplete digestion and formation of *Ama*. This *Ama* further obstructs the channels of *Annavaha Srotas*, producing clinical manifestations such as *Ajirna*, *Agnimandya*, and *Amlapitta*. From a *Kayachikitsa* perspective, correction of *Agni* through *Deepana* and *Pachana* remains the most effective approach for restoring normal digestive function.¹³

Disorders of *Purishavaha Srotas* were found to be closely linked with derangement of *Apana Vata*, which governs the downward movement and elimination of *Purisha*. Suppression of natural urges, intake of dry and heavy food, and chronic digestive weakness disturb *Vata*, leading to conditions such as *Vibandha*, *Atisara*, and *Grahani*. The review emphasizes that bowel-related disorders are rarely isolated conditions and usually reflect chronic dysfunction of digestion. *Kayachikitsa* management therefore focuses on *Vata Shamana*, regulation of bowel habits, and elimination of accumulated *Ama* to achieve sustained relief.¹⁴

A significant observation from this study is the interdependent relationship between *Annavaha* and *Purishavaha Srotas*. Disturbance in digestion invariably affects fecal formation and excretion, while chronic bowel disorders further weaken *Agni*, creating a vicious cycle of disease. *Kayachikitsa* breaks this cycle by adopting a holistic strategy involving *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Shodhana* when indicated, *Shamana* therapy, and strict regulation of *Ahara* and *Vihara*. This integrated approach not only alleviates symptoms but also addresses the root cause, thereby preventing recurrence and promoting long-term gastrointestinal health.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the present review, it can be concluded that disorders of *Annavaha Srotas* and *Purishavaha Srotas* are primarily rooted in derangement of *Agni* and accumulation of *Ama*, leading to functional impairment of digestion and bowel activity. *Kayachikitsa* offers a comprehensive and rational approach for their management by focusing on *Nidana Parivarjana*, restoration of *Agni*, regulation of *Vata*, and correction of *Srotodushti* through *Shodhana* and *Shamana* therapies along with appropriate *Ahara* and *Vihara*. This holistic, root-oriented management not only provides symptomatic relief but also ensures prevention of recurrence and maintenance of long-term digestive and bowel health.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

SOURCE OF SUPPORT

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