



Review Article

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CRITICAL REVIEW OF SIRA SHAREERA

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Abstract

Concept of *Sira* is an important part of Ayurvedic Anatomy as well as *Chikitsa*, *Sira Vyadha* is *Chikitsartha* in *Shalya Tantra*. Origin of *Sira* is *Nabhi* according to *Acharya Sushruta* and *Hrudaya* according to *Acharya Vagbhata*. *Sira* spreads upwards, downwards and horizontally; there are *Vata-Vaha*, *Pitta-Vaha*, *kapha-Vaha* and *Rakta-Vaha Sira* each having specific functions. But no *Sira* carries single *Dosha*; all *Sira* carry all the *Doshas* in it. Out of forty *Moola Sira*, each ten divides into one seventy five accounting for a total of seven hundred *Sira* in *Sharira*.

Even though the *Mula Sthana* has been stated as *Nabhi* by *Acharya Sushruta* the direction of flow is not mentioned clearly; *Acharya Chakrapani* has described it as *Deshantara Gamana* but not the direction. *Chalatwa* is described as its characteristic; thus *Sira* can be understood as a superficial and less adherent structure. In embryonic period, vitelline veins and umbilical veins are exclusively related to umbilicus indicating *Nabhi Moolatwa* of *Sira*. While performing dissection, not all the *Sira* are appearing alike; but the classification of veins on the basis of *Dosha* seem to be not feasible in preserved cadavers. According to Modern Anatomy, veins are innumerable; thus seven hundred *Sira* in *Sharira* is not justified. The functions of *Sira* like *Kriyanam Apratighata*, *Budhi Karmata*, etc. can be justified in modern point of view.

Even though all the details of *Sira* are not complying with venous system; it is best correlated to veins of body. *Pratyaksha* is *Alpa* and *Apratyaksha* is *Analpa*; true knowledge can be beyond the scope of a preserved cadaveric dissection in Anatomy. Anatomical studies may

continue to trace the proof for the different types of *Sira* in future and it may propose to be done with hydraulic dissection similar to dissection method described by *Acharya Sushruta*.

Key words: *Sira*, *Sira Vyadha*, Ayurveda anatomy, *Sira Shareera*

Introduction

Concept of *Sira* is an important part of Ayurvedic Anatomy as well as *Chikitsa*, as the *Siravyadha* is described as the *Chikitsartha* in *Shalyatantra*.^[1] *Acharya Charaka* describes *Sira* is the entity concerned with *Saratwa* which means flowing or carrying. ^[2] *Chalatwa* is described as its characteristic feature, it moves like a fish when *Shastra* is used. Thus, the study about *Sira* is very important and practising *Sira Vyadha* requires mastery. ^[3] This study critically explores the anatomical aspects of *Sira Shareera*.

Origin of *Sira*

Acharya Sushruta describes *Nabhi* as the site of origin of *Sira*. From *Nabhi*, *Sira* spreads upwards, downwards and transversely. ^[4] According to *Acharya Vagbhata*, ten *Moola Sira* are originated from *Hrudaya* and carries *Rasa* and *Ojas*. ^[5]

Distribution of *Sira* in *Sharira*

From a point of origin, distribution of *Sira* is like the spread of water channels in a garden or spread of veinlets in a leaf, both similes portray the function of nutrition or regulation of metabolism.^[6] The simile of lotus stem growing from the tuber also describes the distribution of *Sira* in *Sharira*.^[7]

Classification of *Sira*

According to the main *Dosha* it carries, *Sira* are classified as *Vata-Vaha*, *Pitta-Vaha*, *Kapha-Vaha* and *Rakta-Vaha*. *Vata-Vaha Sira* are reddish brown colour, *Pitta-Vaha* are hot to touch and blue in colour, *Kapha Vaha* are cold to touch, white colour and firm consistency, *Rakta-Vaha Sira* are red in colour and neither very hot nor cold to touch.^[8]

Number of *Sira*

There are forty *Moola Sira*; originating directly from *Nabhi*, each ten carrying *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* and *Rakta*. After reaching their respective sites, each ten divides up into one seventy-five *Sira*. Out of this, hundred supplies *Shakha*, thirty four supplies *Koshta* and forty one supplies *Urdhwajatru Pradesha*. There are four similar sets carrying *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* and *Rakta*, thus forming a total of seven hundred *Sira* in *Sharira*.^[9] Even though *Sira* are classified

according to the *Dosha* it carries, no any *Sira* carry single *Dosha*; every *Sira* carries all the *Dosha*.^[10] So this classification is according to the main *Dosha* carried in each *Sira*.

Functions of *Sira*

Vata-Vaha Sira are concerned with non hinderance of body functions and regulation of cognition. *Pitta-Vaha Sira* are concerned with healthy complexion of body, feeling of taste, proper digestion and over all health of body. *Kapha- Vaha Sira* are concerned with unctuousness of organs, stability of joints and enhancement of strength of body. *Rakta-Vaha Sira* are engaged with nourishment of body tissues, colour and tactile sensation. ^[11]

Importance of *Sira*

Four types of *Sira* present in *Marma* do nourishes *Snayu, Asthi, Mamsa* and *Sandhi* and there by nourishes *Sharira*. ^[12] Out of seven hundred *Sira*, ninety eight are *Avedhya Sira*.^[13] Remaining six hundred and two *Sira* at different regions of *Sharira* can be chosen for *Sira Vyadha* in different *Rogas*.^[14]

Discussion

Classics describes *Sira* as the channels which carry some important material in body. It is distinct form *Dhamani* and *Srotas*. Even though the *Mula Sthana* has been stated as *Nabhi* by *Acharya Sushruta* the direction of flow is not mentioned clearly; *Acharya Chakrapani* has described it as *Deshantara Gamana* and no reference is describing the direction of flow 'from where to where'. *Acharya Vagbhata* stated that the *Moola Sira* originated from *Hrudaya* carries *Rasa* and *Ojas*; *Mulasthana* of *Rasavaha Srotas* is *Hrudaya* and *Rasavaha Dhamani*^[15] and *Sthana* of *Ojas* is *Hrudaya* but *Ojas* is spread all over the *Deha*. ^[17] So from this description also, we cannot conclude that *Sira* carries *Dhatu* from *Hrudaya* to *Sharira Anga* or vice versa. Thus *Sira* cannot be concluded either as artery that carry blood from heart to body tissues or vein which carries blood from body tissues to heart.

Chalatwa when tried to trace is described as a characteristic feature for *Sira*; thus it is understood that *Sira* is a superficial and relatively less adherent to deeper structures. This description favours more towards the characteristic of veins in body which are more superficial and less fixed. More over that, *Sira Vyadha* is an important treatment modality; venal puncture can be done in different conditions but arterial puncture is not common.

Acharya Sushruta has described *Nabhi* as the *Moola Sthana*; this can be justified by reading the concept in embryonic development view; vitelline veins and umbilical veins are exclusively related to umbilicus in embryo. In adult life, veins are ultimately draining into the heart.

Sira are classified into four according to the substance it carries and they are having characteristic colours and texture. While performing dissection, not all the *Sira* are appearing alike. Not all the *Sira* are having same diameter and colour. But classification of those veins on the basis of *Dosha* is not feasible in preserved cadavers.

The concept of ten *Moola Sira* dividing repeatedly to form one seventy five to form a total of seven hundred *Sira* in *Sharira* is not justified by modern anatomy. Number of veins including cutaneous vascular structure will account to form innumerable veins and veinlets in body.

Function of each *Sira* is also described in classics; *Sira* are assigned with unhindered body activities, cognition, body complexion, digestion, joint stability, strength of body, nourishment of *Dhatu* and tactile sensation. In modern point of view also, these functions are concerned with veins. Dural venous sinus when injured can cause cerebral irritations and can hinder body activities and affect cognition. When the veins in lower limb are impaired due to varicosity, skin colour changes to dark complexion. Portal veins are important channels for assimilation after digestion. Veins of joints are important for joint health. When venous return is hindered resulting in edema, loss of tactility may result. Thus, the functions of *Sira* may be justified in modern point of view also.

Sira are important channels in *Sharira*; together with *Dhamani* and *Srotas*, harmony of these channels keep up the homeostasis of *Sharira*.

Conclusion

Study of *Sira Shareera* is important as the same are concerned with many major functions of *Sharira* and *Sira Vyadha* is described as half of *Shalya Tantra Chikitsa*. Even though all the details of *Sira* are not complying with venous system; it is best correlated to veins of body. *Pratyaksha* is *Alpa* and *Apratyaksha* is *Analpa*; that which are visible with naked eye has limitations and true knowledge can be beyond the scope of a cadaveric dissection in Anatomy. So the scope of *Vata-Vaha*, *Pitta-Vaha*, *Kapha-Vaha* and *Rakta-Vaha Sira* can now be understood physiologically and studies may continue to trace the proof for the same in future anatomical explorations.

Scope of further study

Study on the *Varna of Sira* may be done using hydraulic dissection method, similar to the cadaveric dissection method explained by *Acharya Sushruta*.

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Conflict of interest

The author reports no conflict of interest related to this work.

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