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A Comprehensive Review on the Concept of *Annavaha Srotas* and its Clinical Implications

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ABSTRACT

Within the *Ayurvedic* framework, the bodily *doshas*; *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*; *dhatu*s and *mallas* travel between locations through channels known as *srotamsi*. The largest of these is the *Mahasrotas*, or gastrointestinal tract. *Srotas* responsible for moving *Anna*, termed *Annavaha Srotas*, correspond to what modern medicine defines as the digestive or gastrointestinal tract. *Srotas* are the hollow structures with no actual shapes circulating all the constituents of our body, they are further classified into *antaramukha* and *baharyamukh srotas*. *Annavaha Srotas* are mentioned under the category of *antarmukha srotas* which encompasses the mouth, throat, left side of the abdomen, stomach, and the small intestine. These pathways ensure food and liquid are transported and processed inside the body, facilitating the absorption of nutrients and removal of waste. Thus, bodily channels serve as the infrastructure for material and information flow, nutrient uptake, and elimination of waste. Each *srotas* possesses a root (*srotomula*), a pathway (*srotomarga*), and an opening (*srotomukha*). Disruption in the moola of these *srotas* leading to many diseases and disorders related to *Annavaha Srotas* (digestive issues). This is the need of time to treat the diseases by acting on the main *moola* or causes rather than surpassing them and do symptomatic treatment. So modern interpretation of *Annavaha srotas* is the easy way out to understand things better.

Key Words *Srotas, Annavaahasrotas, Srotomula, Mahasrotas, Amashaya*

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INTRODUCTION

The term "*Srusarati*" encompasses meanings such as flowing, exuding, oozing, filtering, and permeating¹. Linguistically, '*srotas*' denotes a channel or conduit through which substances move. In *Ayurveda*, the idea of *srotas* is fundamental, as the body or "*purusha*" is believed to be constituted of countless such channels². Each *srotas* performs a unique and vital function in the body, serving as the primary

route for the transformation and transportation of nutrients as well as waste. *Charaka*, in the *Srotovimana adhyaya*, provides a thorough account of these *srotas*, describing them as both micro and macro spaces responsible for the carriage of diverse biochemical molecules during metabolic processes. *Charaka* further categorizes *srotas* into those that transport nutritious (*prasadakhya*) and waste (*malakhya*) substances³. All molecular products created and transformed

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through metabolism traverse these pathways, which spread throughout the organism to nourish its tissues at a cellular level. Each tissue selectively acquires what it needs from these channels, following what is known as the law of nutrient selection. Srotas are the core locations for metabolic activity, including transportation, transformation, and expulsion of related molecules. Even though *srotas* are innumerable in concept, as number of *murtiman bhava* presents in body is equal to the number of *srotas* in the body³. Key functions are assigned to sets - *Charaka* posits 13 *srotas*, while *Sushruta* recognizes 11.

Annavaaha Srotas: The *Annavaaha Srotas* are the primary channels through which food is conveyed within the human body. Analogous to the digestive tract, these structures are indispensable for transporting and digesting ingested material. Chewed food descends from the mouth to the stomach via the esophagus, where initial digestion occurs before being transferred to the intestines for completion. This pathway must remain clear for proper nutrition; thus, the entirety of the tract from mouth to intestines constitutes the *Annavaaha Srotas* (food-carrying channels).

Origin and Location:

Sushruta's View: *Sushruta* identifies the stomach (*aamashaya*) and specific food-transporting vessels (*annavaahini dhamanis*) as the origins. Disruption here produces symptoms like abdominal distension, pain, aversion to food,

vomiting, thirst, visual disturbances, and in severe cases death⁵.

Charaka's View: *Charaka* states there are two *annavaaha srotas*, rooted in the stomach and the left lateral side of the abdomen. Damage results in lack of appetite and anorexia⁴.

Causes and Management: Excessive or untimely intake of heavy food, consuming unwholesome food, and disturbances in digestive fire (*Agni*) are major causes for vitiation. Management involves treating metabolic dysfunction like *ama* (undigested food/tissue toxins) disorders, utilizing remedies that enhance digestion (*deepana*) and eliminate toxins (*pachana*)⁴.

DISCUSSION

Digestion begins in the mouth and progresses throughout the digestive tract. *Charaka* includes the mouth, throat, side of the abdomen, stomach, and small intestine within *annavaaha srotas*. The process involves bodily factors like *doshas*, tissues, and waste. Specific fluids (*bodhak kapha* on the tongue, *kledak kapha* in the stomach) play crucial roles in mixing, churning, and chemically processing food. In the latter part of the stomach, digestion is completed through interactions among enzymes (*pachak pitta*), digestive fire (*jatharagni*), elemental forces (*bhootagni*), and movement (*samaanvayu*), continuing into the small intestine. Nutrient essence (*aahararasa*) is then available for tissue nourishment, while waste products are separated in the large

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intestine. Both *Charaka* and *Sushruta* agree on the stomach as the essential origin of *annavaha srotas*. The stomach, along with the esophagus and much of the small intestine, constitutes the main avenues for food carriage. Damage to these conduits by internal or external causes leads to various digestive symptoms, some associated with severe malnutrition or trauma. The concept of *annavahini dhamanis* is interpreted as not blood vessels, but as channels like the esophagus and intestine that carry food, including their associated nerves and vessels. The left side of the abdomen (*vamaparshwa*) refers largely to the position of the stomach and related digestive structures.

CONCLUSION

The *Annava ha srotas* represents the pathway responsible for intake and initial processing of food, primarily comprising the digestive tract. Proper function of these channels is vital for nutrient absorption and overall health. Malfunction, especially in the stomach and intestines, leads to indigestion and numerous systemic diseases. Therefore, maintaining the digestive tract's health is crucial for energy, immunity, and longevity.

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