

Annavaahasrotasa as an essential system for digestion and excretion

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Abstract

Ayurveda defines human body is made of different gross and subtle channels called Srotas. Srotas are the channels through which different elements undergo transformation, transmutation, circulation and transportation. The srotas is an integral part of the body, serving as a route to conduct a substance from one place to other. There are 13 major srotas mentioned. The srotas or channels which carry Anna or food is called as Annavaahasrotas with some parts of digestive system or gastrointestinal tract. If the organs of Annavaahasrotas like Amashaya, Antra, Grahanees do not function properly, it leads to indigestion also known as Agnimandya.

Keywords:

Annavaahasrotas, Agnimandya, digestive system, Grahanees.

Introduction

Living body is a channel system comprised of innumerable channels which are designed as inner transport system for divergent functions gross and subtle biological and energetic¹. Srotas is defined as “Srotomayam hi Shariram”. Srotas is used as generic term showing all the macro and micro channels in living organism. According to Ayurveda, Acharya has given various views concerning Moolasthan of Annavaahasrotas whereas Acharya Charak and Vagbhata showed Amashaya and VamaParshava as a Moolasthan of Annavaahasrotas². Therefore, there is unclear knowledge about the Moolasthan of Annavaahasrotas in Ayurved.

Review of Literature

Srotas is internal transport system of the body. Total 13 Srotas are described by Charak while Sushruta has described 11 Srotas³. Annavaahasrotas is commonly described by both Acharya. Annavaahasrotas have their origin in Amashaya and left lateral side. Any pathology in Annavaahasrotas shows the symptoms of loss of desire for food, indigestion, anorexia and vomiting⁴. If Amashaya and food carrying channel get injured then it causes colic pain, vomiting, flatulence, thirst, blindness and death⁵.

In Bruhatrayee literature, Annavaahasrotas denotes three root

sources namely

1. Amashaya
2. Annavaahi Dhamanya
3. Vama- parshwa

Amashaya

Amashaya is the organ situated between the Stananatar (breast) and Nabhi (umbilicus)⁶. This is the organ of Annavaahasrotas and situated in VamaParshwa⁷. Acharya Charak told that Sweda, Rasa, Lasika, Rudhira and Amashaya are the site of Pitta⁸. However Acharya Sushruta told that Amashaya is the site for Kaphasthan and is situated on the superior plane Pittashaya as its action is quiet opposite to that of Pitta and movement is also Urdhwa gati⁹. The sweet and cool kapha keep the food moist and nonirritant, this proves that the first stage is Madhura stage, generating Kapha¹⁰. Amashaya is considered as Matrujavayav which is soft in nature.

Dhamani:

Acharya Charak quotes that ‘Dhmanat Dhamanya’. Dhamani is a structure through which transportation takes place, the difference is only about the pulsation in it¹¹. Vessels which carry Ras and Rakta towards the body and bears the property of pulsation, known as Dhamani¹².

Annavaahini Dhamani:

Annavaahini is like a tubular structure extending from mouth to stomach, also known as Anna nadi (esophagus). This Anna nadi is situated behind the Swasnadi (trachea) which expands below like a funnel, passes through

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diaphragm and enters into abdominal cavity to continue itself as Amashaya (stomach). Acharya Sushruta has included it as a rot source of Annava Srotas¹³.

VamParshva (Kshudrantra)

Kshudrantra lies in between the Amashaya and Pakwashaya. It retains the food, allows the digested food to pass on to the next stage of digestion, known as 'Grahane'. Grahane becomes deranged by Agnimandya, it allows undigested food only for excretions. Injured Grahane shows the clinical feature of pain, tenesmus, constipation some time diarrhea such condition is defined as Grahane Roga.^{14,15}

Discussion

Annava Srotas is one of the important Srotas present in body providing nutrition to each cell. The moolasthan told in Bruhatrayee are Amashaya, Vamaparshwa and Annava Dhamani. The Amashaya told in Ayurved has similarities with stomach in contemporary science. Stomach secretes acid juice and powerful enzymes that metabolize the food into consistency of liquid or paste. The food moves to small intestine from stomach via duodenum.

Vamaparshwa told by Charak can be understand as left lateral aspect of abdominal cavity which can be correlated with left hypochondriac region. Acharya Charak included Vamaparshwa as one of the root source of Annava Srotas.

Dhamani is a broad term used in Ayurved literature at various places and is related to transportation of the materials. According to Acharya Sushruta, moolasthan of Annava Srotas is Annava Dhamani. In Ayurved literature, Dhamani word is taken as artery. But several times such terms are used in many contexts.

Dhamani is used as synonyms of Srotas as by Charak, however, Sushruta has excluded Sira and Dhamani from Srotas. This clears that the term like Dhamani has meaning depending upon the place where it is used.

In above discussion, it is clear that esophagus and small intestine are two tubular structures connected stomach helping for transportation of indigested food and digestion. Dhamani is also a tube like structure which performs the function of transportation. It means that Dhamani is a tubular like structure for transportation of concerned material but not the artery. Therefore, esophagus and small intestine can be considered as Annava Dhamani.

Conclusion

Annava Srotas is related to structural and functional units associated with mechanical and chemical digestion in esophagus, stomach, duodenum small intestine as described in Ayurvedic literature. Srotas is the micro and macro channels as well as pathways operating in living organism for transportation of food / digestive materials as well as secretions of the gastro intestinal system in the process of digestion, absorption and assimilation.

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