

SROTAS IN VEDAS

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Abstract

The term srotas means channel meaning to exude, to ooze, to filter, to permeate. Charaka has defined it as structure through which sravanam takes place.

The srotasas are the fundamental unit of body. It is an anatomical structure, which carries nutritive materials essential to the growth and development of the body. Grossly they are tracts like ducts, tubular structure, blood vessels, lymphatic channels, etc.

Vedas are considered ultimate source of knowledge and the most ancient written literature of the world. Srotas has been described in Vedas in short form. The terms which are used to describe the srotas in Vedas in the various hymns are Panthan, Srotya, Dhamanyh, Nadhi, Khanin and Snawni. All these words are applied in sense of organs predominantly constituted by Akash mahabhuta.

In Atharva Veda this term has been used in sense of blood flow, which is closely related to Srotas. (Ath.// 214)

Ayurveda, the "science of life" or longevity is the holistic alternative science from India and is more than 5000 years old. It is believed to be the oldest healing science in existence, forming the foundation of all others.

Ayurveda was passed down from God to his angels, and finally to humans.

There were two schools of Ayurveda at the time of Atreya, the school of physicians and the school of surgeons. These two schools transformed Ayurveda into a scientifically verifiable and classifiable medical system.

The unit cell of life is amoeba which performs its all functions desired for keeping up the life.

All the physiological activities are found within such small unit even against the adversities but as the cell multiplies it requires additional communication and supply system.

The life of a cell in multi-cellular animal depends upon the status of interstitial fluid and the supply lines in the forms of capillary vessels, which ultimately lead to respective major vessels. The micro-vascular supply lines are said to be known in

Ayurvedic literature as Srotas. This dynamic exchange function takes place in the capillaries which has been called in Ayurveda as Sru Srawan.

Ayurveda had gone to extend by laying the importance of Srotas that Srotas is a cause of health and disease.

जीवितायता च।^१

The term Srotas has been defined by Sushruta as the channels of the body having originated from vacant spaces spread throughout the body transporting nutrient materials to different tissues of the body but at the same time they are different from Sira and Dhamanias.

मूलात् खदन्तरं देहे प्रसृतं त्वभिवाहि यत् ।

स्रोस्तदिति विज्ञेयं सिराधमनिवर्जितम् ॥^२

The body channels or Srotas are classified as internal channels and external channels, internal channels having their natural orifice on the surface of the body. These openings are nine in number. Two are situated caudally and seven cranially. The cranially situated openings are two Nasika, two karma, two netra and one of mukha. The caudal two openings

are one of the Guda canus and the other Mutra prasek.

श्रवण, नयन-वदन-घ्राण-गुद-मेद्राणि नवस्रोतांसि
नराणां बहिर्मुखानि, एतान्येव स्त्रीणामपराणि च त्रीणि
द्वे स्तनयोरधस्ताद्रक्तवहं च।³

In Bhagwat Geeta, these nine srotas have been terms as 'navadwar'

नवद्वारे पुरे देही कुर्वन् कारयन् ॥⁴

Life depends upon three main constituents – Air, Water and Food. The body is constituted by the seven dhatus and the end products formed in the body due to catabolism of Dhatus i.e. mutra, purish and sweda, all total 13 and so Acharyas has also described thirteen internal Srotas carrying each of them. He also considered the clinical signs and symptoms related with their pathology (Srotodusti).

तानि तु प्राणान्नेदक-रस-रक्त मांस मेदो-मूत्र-पुरीष-
शुक्रार्त्तवहानि येष्वधिकारः, एकेषां बहूनि, एतेषां
विशेषा बहवः।⁵

तद्यथा- प्राणोदकान्न रस रूधिर मांस

मेदोस्थिमज्जशुक्रमूत्रपुरीषस्वेदवहानीतिः।⁶

1. Pranavaha Srotas	Respiratory system
2. Udakvaha Srotas	Channels of fluid or water distribution
3. Annavaha Srotas	Gastrointestinal tract
4. Rasavaha Srotas	Lymphatic system
5. Raktavaha Srotas	Vascular system
6. Mamsavaha Srotas	Channels which carry nutrition to mamsa or muscle tissue
7. Medovaha Srotas	Channels which carry nutrition to adipose tissue
8. Asthivaha Srotas	Channels going to bone marrow
9. Majjavaha Srotas	Channels through which nutrition to productive tissue is transported
10. Shukravaha Srotas	Reproductive system

11. Mutravaha Srotas	Urinary system
12. Purishvaha Srotas	Caecum and Colon
13. Swedavaha Srotas	Ducts of sebaceous glands
14. Artavavaha Srotas	Female reproductive system including uterine vessels

Charak has used different synonyms for the term Srotas. These are as follows:

स्रोतांसि, सिराः, धमन्यः, रसायन्यः, रसवाहिन्यः,
नाड्यः, पन्थानः, मार्गाः शरीरच्छिद्राणि,
संवृतासंवृतानि, स्थानानि, आशयाः, निकेताश्चेति
शरीर धात्वावकानां लक्ष्यालक्ष्याणां नामानि
भवन्ति।⁹

The "Veda" has a two fold interest: it belongs to the history of the world and to the history of India ... As long as man continues to take an interest in the history of his race, and as long as we collect in libraries and museums the relics of former ages, the first place in that long row of books which contains the records of the Aryan branch of mankind will belong for ever to the Rig-veda.

In Vedas the description of word Srotas is available in very short form. So it is very important to collect the scattered knowledge regarding Srotas in Vedas.

Rigveda

So called because its Samhita or collection of mantras or hymns consists of Richas or verses intended for loud recitation.

In Rigveda, the following references are found which deals with Srotas

गिरीणां स्रु भिरेषाम् ।¹⁰

उग्रो यथि नित्यः स्रोतः ससृजत्

Yajurveda

इन्द्रस्थ क्रोडोडादित्ये हिराभि सवन्तीर्हृदान
कुक्षिभ्यां समुद्रमुदरेण वैश्वानरं भस्मना।¹¹

In Yajurveda, the term 'Nirabhi Srawanati' signifies Srotasas so functionally Srawanati and synonymically (means Sira) is used for Srotas.

आदित्योर्म श्रुभिः पन्थानं भ्रूम्यां द्यावा पृथिवी
पक्ष्याणि पार्या इक्षवः।^{११}

In another hymn the meaning of Panthan is taken as Marga which is synonym of Srotas.

अविर्न मेषो नसिवीर्याय प्राणस्य पन्था अमृतोग्रहाम्याम्।
सरस्वत्युपवा केर्णानं नस्यानि बर्हिर्बदरैर्जजान।^{१२}

Pransya Pantha indicates Pranavaha Srotas and the functions of Prana and Vyan Vayus are also indicated.

नमः स्रुत्याय चपथ्याय च नमः काट्याय च नीयाय च नमः
कुल्याय चसरस्याय च नमो नादेयाय च वैशन्ताय च।^{१३}

In short, it can be said that few words used in Yajurveda in the sense of Srotas are as:

Srutyaya
Sarstyaya
Panthaya
Kulyaya
Vaishantaya

Atharvaveda

Topics comprised organ transplants, artificial limbs and the use of herbs diseases of the mind and body and to foster longevity. Within the Atharvaveda's 5977 hymns are discussion of anatomy physiology and surgery. Eventually Ayurveda was considered a branch of Atharvaveda.

There is a panorama of the words which stands for the Srotas in the following way—

यथा द्यां च पृथिवी चान्तिष्ठति तेजन्म् ।
एवां रोगं चा स्नावं चान्तिष्ठतु मुञ्जइत।^{१४}

Asrava

In Atharvaveda, this term has been used in the sense of blood flow, which is closely related to the Srotas.

को अस्मिन्नापो व्यदिधाद् विषूवतः पुरुवृतः सिन्धुस्रुत्यायजाताः।
तीव्रा अरुणा लोहिनीस्ताम्रधूम्रा ऊर्ध्वा अवाचीः पुरुषे
तिरश्चीः।^{१५}

इमा यास्ते शतं हिराः सहस्रः धमनीरुत।^{१६}

Hira

This word stands for Sira. It is mentioned that the blood which flows in the 'Hira' contains two peculiar colours viz. 'Tivra Arun' (fast red, colour – pure blood) and Tamra Dhumra (blue reddish – impure blood). In this way the word 'Hira' has been classified into two groups viz. containing pure blood and containing impure blood.

Dhamani

According to Atharvaveda, the blood flows in the body through hundreds of Dhamanies. It indicated towards the synonyms of Srotas, Dhamani, Sira and Nadi.

In this context this fact is also revealed that there is a network of Sira and Dhamanies in the body for blood circulation and they are thousands in number. These structures are luminous and distributed in each and every part of body.

यदान्तेषु गवीनयोर्ध्वं द्वस्तावधि संश्रुतम् ।

एवाते मूत्रं मुच्यता बहि बलिति सर्वकम् ।^{१७}

“सहस्रं धमनीरुत।”^{१८}

सन्दर्भः

१. अ.ह.शा. ३/४१-४२
२. सु.शा. ९/१३
३. सु.शा. ५/१०
४. भगवद् गीता ५/१३
५. सु.सू. ९/१२
६. च.वि. ५/६
७. च.वि. ५/९
८. ऋ. ८/४६-१८
९. ऋ. १/५१-११
१०. शु.यजु.वे. २५/८
११. यजु. २५/१, पृ. ४५५
१२. यजु. १९/९०, पृ. ३८२
१३. शु.यजु. १६/३७, पृ. ३०३
१४. अथ. १/२/४
१५. अथ. १०/१-२-११
१६. अथ. १०/१-२-११
१७. अथ. १/३२-३
१८. अथ. ७/३-३६/२