REVIEW ARTICLE

Inter-relationship between Annavaha Srotas and Agni w.s.r. Shodhana Therapy

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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 convey substance from one place to other. There are 13 major srotas mentioned. The Srotas or channels which carry Anna or Food is called Annavaha Srotas. Some authorities equate the Annavaha Srotas with the some parts of digestive system or the gastrointestinal tract. Agni, the transformative energy, in the Annavaha srotas digest and transforms the food into components suitable for the body. Impairment of function of agni is root the cause of the disease, which manifest either in Annavaha srotas or other srotas in the body. Thus, correction of agni is the prime in treatment of any disease. Elimination of vitiated doshas by Panchakarma procedure viz Vaman and Virechana has shown to have impact on agni through various guna used in these therapy. Sodhana procedures has a significant role in improving the function of agni and restoring the health.

Keywords: Annavaha srotas, Agni, Pancakarma, Sodhana

INTRODUCTION

Health and ailing, pleasure and pain, cure and disease are the inborn properties of human life. Centuries and centuries succeeded in the struggle between the man and the disease. Mankind has suffered from many types of physical and mental changes which may lead to disease. Medicine helps human bodies to fight and sustain against disease. There are a number of medical sciences and traditional sciences available for the various types of disorders. Oldest and strongest among all of these is Ayurveda. Ayurveda is the rich store house of time tested and effective methods for the treatment of several obstinate and other wise diseases which are difficulty to treat. One unique method is “Panchakarma”. Panchakarma is a comprehensive and an integral part of Ayurvedic treatment and have its role in every therapeutic condition. Due to its long lasting and radical relief of chronic diseases, it is now developing globally. This therapy primarily aims at internal purification of the body including the gross channels up to cellular level. Ayurveda is a holistic science of life and the panchakarma therapy helps to prevent and cure the disorders caused by vitiation of Doshas. Panchakarma is highly preferred to cure any diseases with least possibility of recurrence. It consists of five main procedures. Charak samhita has stated in praise of panchakarma that doshas which are cured by langhan, pachan, etc., may aggravate to cause the disease again, but doshas cured by Samshodhana doesn’t reoccur.1 Ayurvedic approach towards the treatment consists of two major categories: Samsodhana chikitsa (Bio purification of the body) and Samsamana Chikitsa (Palliative treatment). Samsodhana therapy consists of a number of physio-physiologic measures advocated in the treatment of the diseases. The panchakarma therapy is a similar samshodhana regime. It is divided in to 3 major parts viz. Purva karma (Preparatory methods like oleation and fomentation), Pradhana karma (Main samshodhana measures like Vaman, Virecana, Basti, Nasya, Anuvasana)
and Paschata karma (Post therapy regimen), Pancakarma form a part in the regimen of Swastha Vritta (Preventive medicine) indicated as prophylactic measures in the context of epidemics and panepidemics. Besides, its application in the treatment of disease, they are also stated as preparatory measures before surgery and also before administration of Rasayana (Rejuvenation therapy) and Vajikarana therapy (Aphrodisiac therapy) and in Ksetrikarana treatment (Before internal administration of Mercurial preparation). Thus, panchakarma therapy has direct references to both the health as well as the ailment. In Ayurveda, the concept of Srotas has been propagated very specifically. Body is composed of numerous Srotas, which have a significant role in the maintenance of the equilibrium of body elements. They are responsible for the maintenance of health as well as diseased condition. If considered physiologically, 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 or convey a substance from one place to other. Another concept of Srotas is its microscopic description. Their functions include nourishment, circulation, excretion and reproduction. In brief, the concept of Srotas includes microscopic, macroscopic, anatomical, physiological and pathological consideration. Caraka has laid more stress to understand and explain the Srotas and their role in the maintenance in health and bringing out a pathological condition. There are thirteen types of Srotas described in detailed in Ayurveda classics. Among these thirteen Srotasas, the division is as follows:

Three important most vital conductors: Pranavaha, Udakavaha, and Annavaha, 7 Srotas of Dhatus, 3 Srotas of Malas

Though the Acaryas differ in the opinion, the first three Srotas are given prime importance by both Acharya Charaka and Acharya Sushruta.

Annavaha Srotas is the channel of the body that carries the food undergoing chemical and biochemical changes and metabolism. The food remains in this complex channel till it is digested and is ready for Sarakitta Vibhajana. Agni is believed to be the agency for any kind of transformation. It is a known fact that at each and every second multiple procedures of transformations take place in the body. Due to these constant transformation procedures, body grows, develops and lastly gets destroyed too. The word Agni in this context does not mean fire with flame and smoke. Agni is placed among the twelve Prāṇa of the body, which reflects its importance for maintaining life. Just taking food is not enough. The body needs to convert it into a form which is suitable to body tissues and to keep up the energy, health, immunity and life intact. To do this the fire within should be in balanced state. If the stomach and intestines do not function properly and are unable to digest the given food properly, it leads to indigestion. Indigestion is the basic culprit which cause many systemic illnesses. Therefore first and foremost care is to be taken of Agni. we need to take care of our stomach and appetite. Hence to bring the state of Homeostasis in the body, the status of Agni should be stable. This is possible when its sthan (location) is proper for its functioning and Amasaya is the nearest one. So the topic is selected for the maintenance of Annavaha Srotas through Shodhana therapy to enhance Agni.

Concept of Annavaha Srotas

The Srotas or channels which carry Anna or Food is called Annavaha Srotas. Some authorities equate the Annavaha Srotas with the digestive system or the gastrointestinal tract. But this opinion does not seem to be correct. The first half of the alimentary canal represents the Annavaha Srotas while the latter half is the representative of the Purisavaha Srotas.

Mula Sthanas: (i) Amasaya (ii) Vama Parswa (iii) Annavahi Dhamanis Regarding the Mula Sthana, Amasaya is a common organ accepted by all the authorities. There is a difference of opinion regarding the second organ, Vama Parswa and Annavahi Dhamanis. These terms have not been clarified by the ancient scholars or commentators. Some opine that, Vama Parswa can be correlated with oesophagus, while Annavahi Dhamanis stand for Grahani and Kshudrantra. Susruta mentions two Annavahi Srotas and the term Dhamani is used in pleural. Leaving aside the controversial points, it is clear that Amasaya is the important most organ of this system. This obviously indicates that the food ingested is in Ama or Apakwa stage in the Annavaha Srotas. Though the process of digestion starts at earlier phase in the mouth, the Amasaya plays most important role in the further mechanism.

Agni: Every Srotas has Agni in itself, may it be Dhatwagni or Bhutagni. All these are derivative of Jatharagni, the basic power of transformation and forms the basic component of Annavaha Srotas. Hence physiology of Annavaha Srotas is dependent on the condition of Agni. Jatharagnimandya affects the whole body but the pathogenesis starts from Annavaha Srotas.

Paka: Food ingested undergoes many changes through the action of Jatharagni. These changes are needed for further metabolism and absorption. The process of such changes is nominated as Paka, which occurs at three different levels. Madhura Avasthapaka, Amla Avasthapaka, and Katu Avasthapaka. All these have different actions and results on the body tissues. The first two Avasthapakas are attributed to the Annavaha Srotas and the last, Katu Avasthapaka is related with the Purisavaha Srotas. Madhura Avasthapaka takes place in Amasaya with help of Kledaka Kapha, while Amlapaka occurs in Grahani. As explained above, many of the dietetic rules are advised by considering the stage of Paka. For example: Usna food helps in the secretion of Bodhaka and Kledaka Kapha, thereby helping in Madhura Avasthapaka. The same is true with Snigdha food. Usna
food is also responsible for proper secretion of Pacaka Pitta leading to Amla Avasthapaka.

**Doshas related with Annavaha Srotas: Prana Vayu** is responsible for the ingestion and transportation of food from mouth towards the Amasaya. The speed of food intake affects this process and the abnormality of speed i.e., Atidrata or Ativilambita vitiates Prana vayu. **Samana Vayu** is situated near the Agni (Agnisamipastha). The ingestion, digestion and separation of Sārā-Kittā are the functions of this Vata. All the dietetic rules obviously affect Agni and in turn Samana Vayu also e.g., Less quantity of the food can provoke this Vata. Increased Samana vayu leads to the increase in Tikṣna Guna of Agni that starts to digest the body tissues in absence of food. This results in the weakening of the body (Karsya).

**iii Pacaka Pitta** - The main type of Pitta is situated between Amasaya and Pakwasaya. The functions of Agni are same as that of Pacaka Pitta. Hence all the factors of Ahara Vidhi Vidhana affect Pacaka Pitta invariably. e.g. Matravat, Jirme, Usna, Snigdha, etc. **Bodhaka Kaptha** - Situated in Rasana, functions for the proper knowledge of tastes. The proper secretion of Bodhaka Kaptha is needed for the digestion process in mouth. Usna and Snigdha food stimulate this secretion and help for proper digestion. **Kedaka Kaptha** - Situated in Amasaya. It is important for the Kledana of the food bolus. Again, it is explained earlier that, Usna and Snigdha food help in proper secretion of Kedaka Kaptha. Though Ranjaka Pitta is situated in Amasaya, it is not much related with the physiology of digestion in Annavaha Srotas. All the statements of Ahara Vidhi Vidhana directly or indirectly affect all the above Doshas involved in digestion. But a brief idea about their relationship can be gained from above description.

**Annava Srotogata Vyadhis**

**Hetu** : Some general causes and symptoms of Srotodusti are described by Charak.

Ahara and Vihara having similar qualities to Dosas having and opposite qualities to Dhatus are the general Hetus for all the Srotodusti. Charak also described specific causes as well as symptoms for each Srotas. The causitive factors that vitiate Annavaha Srotas are,

(i) Atimatra (Overeating)
(ii) Akala (Untimely eating)
(iii) Ahita (Unwholesome food)
(iv) Pawaka vaigunya (Impairment of Agni)

Actually after combining the general and specific Hetus of Annavaha Srotodusti, it is clear that all these finally lead to Agnidusti. No to follow the Ahara Vidhi Vidhana is also a major cause for Agnidusti.

**Symptoms**

In short, the symptoms of vitiation are,

- Increase in the activity of Srotas (Atiyoga)
- Decrease in the activity of Srotas (Hinayoga)
- Obstruction of the channels
- (Altered direction of the Srotas (Mithayyoga)

The characteristic symptoms of Annavaha Srotodusti are,

- Annaabhiilasha (Disinclination for food)
- Arochak (Anorexia)
- Avipaka (Improper digestion)
- Chardi (A tendency to vomit)

**Diseases of Annava Srotas:**

Agnimandya is the root cause for all the diseases. The first effect of Agnimandya can be observed on Annava Srotas. Therefore it can be said that each and every disease has the Dusti of Annava Srotas, primarily.

The pathogenesis further develops in different Srotas according to disease. But there are some diseases in which the placement of pathogenic factors is mainly in Annava Srotas.

Some of such diseases are: Ajirna, Alasaka, Visucika, Chardi, Amlapitta, Sula, Parinamasula, Grahani, Adhmana, Udavarta, Arocaka, Bhasmaka, Krm.

A classification of Annava Srotogata Vyadhis is shown according to Ahara Vidhi Vidhana.

One more classification can be done according to the general types of vitiation of Srotas.

**Atipravrtti** : Chardi, Urdhvaga Amlapitta, Visucika, Bhasmaka. In context of Annava Srotas, untoward fast movement of Ahara in the canal can be considered as Atipravrtti. Excessive secretion of digestive juices like saliva and hyper peristalsis also come under this.

**Sanga** : Adhmana, Vistabhdajirna, Alasaka, Udaragaurava, Arocaka

**Sira Granthi** : Organic deformity or obstruction due to internal or external Salya.

**Vimarga Gamanam** : Hikka (Annaja), Udavarta, Udgaradhikya

Classification on the basis of Nanatmaja Vyadhis of Dosas

**Dosh Nanatmaja Vyadhis related to Annava Srotas**

Vata Udavarta, Kasaya Asyata, Mukha-sosa, Arasajnata, Pitta Amlaka, Vidaha, Tikta - Asyata, Lohita Gandhasyata, Putimukhata, Atrpti, Mukhapaka, Kapha Trpti, Mukha-madhyura, Mukha Srava, Slesma-Udgiranam, Apakti, Sitagnita.
Here, important point to be noted is the diseases of Pitta and Kapha Dosha are more related to Annavaha Srotas than the diseases of Vata Dosha. This indicates that Kapha and Pitta are more involved in the physiology and pathology of Annavaha Srotas. Amasaya is the main organ of this system which is also the important site for Kapha (Kledaka) and Pitta (Pacaka).

These two Doshas are responsible for digestion in Amasaya, therefore they are more capable to vitiate the organ and the whole system.

This Sutra of Caraka is also in favor of the above discussion. Among the general list of Srotogata Vyadhis, many Vyadhis are common for both the Srotas eg. Amalapitta, Ajirna, Grahanī, Alasaka, Visucika, Adhmana, Udavarta etc. Very few diseases can purely attributed to either Annavaha or Purisavaha Srotas. Thus it can be said that the disease affecting Annavaha Srotas definitely affects the Purisavaha Srotas and vice versa.

**Concept of Agni**

Concept of Agni in Ayurveda is quite different than of philosophical concept. Various Indian philosophies describe Agni as an important Tatva (element) of the universe. Vaisesika opines that Agni is one of the Karana Dravya which is eternal and one of the material cause of the entire universe. It further mentions types of Agni; one among them is Audaryagni which resides in the body of animate world performing the function of digestion and metabolism. Ayurveda deals with this kind of Agni only. These may be bio chemical or bio physical or any other type of bio-transformations. Ayurvedic classics describe 13 types of Agnis according to their locations and functions of transformation at different levels of digestion and metabolism. But this is not the final figure.

Acharya Vagbhata says that each of the Dosha, Dhatu, Mala etc. have their own Agni. This is how the number of Agni cannot be limited. With the help of its own Agni, each body substance gets nourished and can perform its normal functions. This can be understood in the terms of digestion & metabolism processes at gross and cellular level. Each cell of the body gets nourishment from digested food and utilizes it according to its own necessity. This function is carried out with the help of some organelles of the particular cell. This procedure can easily be co-related with Agni Karma. This is how all these Agnis are important for sustaining the life. In the disease state vitiated Dosha, Dhatu or Mala can be corrected with treatment of respective Agni. But this is comparatively difficult and more complex procedure because any of the classic doesn’t have clear cut description of particular kind of Dravya for particular Dhatvagni or Doshagni etc. So till today the question has remain unanswered that whether the Dhatvagnijanya Vikaras can be dealt through the media of Jatharagni or not, because references regarding interrelationship of Jatharagni and Dhatvagni are found in almost all classics.

**Importance of Agni**

Acharya while describing importance of Agni says that it is responsible for the Āyu, Bala, Varpa, Swāṣṭhya, Upacaya, Prabhā, Oja and Prāṇa.

The Prāṣama or Prakopa of Doṣa, Dhātu and Mala are depended on the status of Agni. In other words, it can be said that homeostasis of Doṣha etc can be maintained through Agni as per Acharya Caraka.

By seeing an importance of Agni, Acharya Suṣruta enlisted equilibrium of Agni as a Characteristic feature of health.

Agni is placed among the twelve Prāṇa of the body, which reflects its importance for maintaining life.

The Agni can also be quoted as synonym of Āyu in the form of Jivita.

**Effect of Shodhana Therapy on Agni**

**Effect of Vamana**

Vamana karma is considered as the first, major & laborious pradhana karma (main procedure) of panchakarma therapy. Literally, vamana karma means to induce therapeutic vomiting or to expel out the vitiated doshas through oral route, which is indicated for the purification of udhwabhaga of the body. It is that process by which the contents of the stomach including kapha and pitta are expelled out of body through oral route. The main place of kapha is udhwabhaga and amasaya. It is a general principle to expel vitiated doshas from the nearest route, while the oral route is the nearest route for expelling kapha dosha in the form of vamana karma. So the removal of vitiated kapha dosha from amasaya is the best way to cure a disease. According to Charak it is meant for purification of upper part of body. But according to Sharangadhara and Bhavaprakash the word vamana is used to denote the removal of “Apakwa kapha and pitta” forcibly outside. It is important to understand that the vamana karma is indicated for elimination of kapha dosha not only in diseased states but also in healthy individuals in different states where kapha dosha is aggravated within normal limits. So for this reason vamana karma is specifically indicated in kaphaj disorders, where kapha is predominant.

It is a process in which waste products i. e. vitiated doshas are eliminated out through the upper channels i. e. through the mouth. Cakrapani mentions that udhwabhaga should be considered as udhwamukha. While Sharangadhara describes the same in other words as-the process in which, Apakwa pitta and kapha are forcibly expelled out through the upward route. Likewise Charak has said that: Vamana is the best treatment to eliminate out the vitiated kapha dosha from the body. So in this way all are well concerned that vamana helps to remove all sorts of derangements regarding kapha. But the question arises why pitta is also mentioned emphatically along with kapha while defining vamana? What might be the reason that for the treatment of apakwa pitta, vamana takes the leading seat ahead of virechana?


**MECHANISM OF VAMANA KARMA**

Vamaka drugs possessing the properties like *Ushna, Tikshna, Sukshma, Vyavayi,*

↓

**Vikasi.**

↓

And with their ‘*Swavirya*’

↓

Move to *Hridaya,*

↓

From there, through various ‘*Dhamanis’*

↓

Leads to micro and macro channels in the body.

↓

Acts over the vitiated complexes in the body

a. with ‘*Agneya property*’ - liquefies the complex

b. with ‘*Tikshna property*’ - Break them down in to several particles.

↓

Liquefied matter then glides through various unctuous or Smooth channels towards *Kostha.*

↓

Enters ‘*Amashaya*’ and is then stimulated by ‘*Udana Vayu*’

↓

Having the dominance of ‘*Agni*’ and ‘*Vayu*’ elements in the constitution

Along with self disposition (*Prabhava*).

↓

Move in upward direction towards oral cavity.

↓

Expelled to outside through it.

↓

*Vamana*

Going through the mechanism it seems to be the drugs used for the *Vaman* therapy is of *Usna Virya* which definitely help the *Agni* for its enhancement. Hence *Vaman* is the procedure which ultimately works on *Annavaha Srotas* and brings to balance the state of *Kapha Dosa.*

**Effect of Virechana Karma**

The word “*Rechana*” is commonly used in the first sense i.e. *Ricir* = evacuation. As the evacuation is done by both *Vamana* and *Virecana,* therefore sometimes *virecana* word is used for both *vamana* and *virecana.* But, in general *virecana* word denotes to evacuation through lower gut by purgation.\(^\text{19}\)

The process of elimination of morbid *doshas* through *adhobhaga* i.e *Guda* is *virechana.* *Virechana* is a broad term which is applied even for *Vamana karma* since the expulsion of *doshas* takes place from either route.\(^\text{21}\)

The process of elimination of *mala* either in *pakwa* or in *apakwa avastha* but along with excess fluid portions is called as *Virecana.* In *Virecana* the *doshas* even from the *Amashaya* are taken to the *Pakwashaya* and are removed through Gudamarga.

**Karyakshetra of Virechana**

This can be explained on the basis of its effect on *dosa, dushya, srotas, agni* and *ama.*

**Dosa:** *Virechana* is said to be beneficial for *pitta dosha,* since it eliminates vitiated *pitta* from its root. According to *Vagbhata,* *virechana* is also helpful in *pitta* combined with *kapha* or *kapha in Pitta sithana.*\(^\text{22}\) while Bhela mentions *Virechana* in *sannipata* conditions also.

**Dushya:** *Virechana* is mentioned as *shodhana* procedures in *dushti* of *Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Asthi, Majja* and *shukra dhatus.* Hence, in majority of the *dhatupradoshaya vikaras virechana* is a better option.\(^\text{23}\)

**Srotas:** Since *virechana* is helpful in above mentioned dusyas, it can be beneficial in *Rasavaha, Raktavaha,* *Mamsvaha,* *Ashthvaha,* *Majjavaha* and *Shukravaha srotodushi* also.

**Agni:** In the *samyak virikta lakshana,* *deepagans* is mentioned. Hence, *virechana* improves the *mandagani* state also.

**Ama:** Since *langhana* is done for *amapachana,* *virechana* is mentioned under *shodhana in langhana,* hence, it is even beneficial in *ama state.*\(^\text{24}\)

**VIRECHANA DRUGS**

*Usna, Tikksa, Sukksma, Vyavayi, Vikasi*

↓

Due to their “*virya*” ( *vyavayi*).

↓

Move to ‘*Hridaya*’

From there, through various ‘*dhamanis*’ (*vyavayi*).

↓

Lead to micro and macro channels in the body.

↓

Act over the vitiated complexes in the body with ‘*Agneya property*’ - liquefy the complexes ( *vishyandayati*) with ‘*Tikshna property*’ – Break them down into several particles (*Vikasi*).

↓

Liquefied matter then glides through various unctuous channels towards *kostha* (*Pravana bhava* of *sukshma gana*).
Enter ‘Amashaya’ and then stimulated by ‘Udana vayu’ ‘Agni and vayu’ elements in the constitution along with (Prabhava).

Move in downward direction towards oral cavity (Prithvi and jala mahabhuta prabhava).

Expelled to outside through it. Virechana.

Also going through the mechanism it seems to be the drugs used for the Virechana therapy is of Usna Virya too which also help the Agni for its enhancement. Hence Virechana is the procedure which works on Annavaha Srotas too bringing the balance in the state of Pitta Dosha.

CONCLUSION

Without the state of Sama Agni, proper health can’t be gained and hence the main aim of Ayurveda for healthy being and cure of ailments can’t be achieved. Annavaha Srotas is the main for the proper mechanism in the food being taken by the individual and this mechanism is carried through Agni only. For the balance in Agni, the need of Shodhan therapy is essential as it enhances its property of Usnata. Hence there is close relation between the Sodhana therapy, Agni and Annavaha Srotas which play important role for bringing the state of homeostasis in the human body.

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