



Pranavaha Srotas in Ayurveda: A Comprehensive Literary Review

Amruta Suresh Jaybhay*¹, Sampada Sant²,

1. BAMS, MD (Kriyasharir), PhD (Scholar), Asso. Prof, Dept of Kriyasharir, Vasant Dada Patil Ayurvedic medical college and centre of yoga, Sangli, Maharashtra
2. PhD Guide and Dean, R.A. Potdar Ayurved Medical College, Worli, Mumbai, Maharashtra

*Corresponding author: dr.amruta06@gmail.com

Abstract:

Brief overview of *Pranavaha srotas* explained in *Ayurvedic* compendia. *Pranavaha srotas* is a crucial concept of *Ayurveda*, representing the respiratory system and the channels associated with the respiration. This literary review delves into the classical *Ayurvedic* texts to explore the depth of knowledge surrounding *Pranavaha srotas* and its functions. The foundational texts of *Ayurveda*, such as *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, extensively discuss *Moolasthanas*, *Dushti hetu* and *Dushti Lakshna* of *Pranavaha srotas*. They describe the intricate network of channels responsible for the movement of *Prana* i.e. the vital life force. *Pranavaha Srotas* is the channel which carries the external air into the body to sustain the life. Understanding these channels is essential for maintaining overall health and preventing diseases related to

respiration like *Shwasa*, *Kasa*, *Hikka*, etc. *Pranavaha srotas* plays a pivotal role in regulating *Vata*, which governs the movement of air and is intimately linked to the respiratory system. Imbalances in *Vata* can lead to various respiratory disorders, emphasizing the importance of maintaining harmony in *Pranavaha srotas*. *Moolasthanas* of *Srotas* are the important area for proper functioning of *Srotas*. Therefore, the treatment of any disease should also be included the intervention for the betterment of *Srotas*.

Keywords: *Pranavaha Srotas*, *Prana*, *Moolasthanas*

Introduction:

Ayurveda, the ancient system of medicine rooted in holistic principles, holds within its realms the intricate wisdom of *Pranavaha*

Srotas, the channel responsible for proper function of respiratory system, recognizes *Pranavaha Srotas* as pivotal for respiratory health. This review explores its significance through historical contexts, textual analysis and the mind :body connection.

Ayurvedic interventions for respiratory health often involve a combination of lifestyle modifications, dietary recommendations, and *Chikitsa* according to *Doshas*. The texts highlight specific *Dravyas* and formulations known for their efficacy in supporting the *Pranavaha Srotas*, promoting clear breathing, and maintaining respiratory health. To treat the pathological conditions, we must know the basic physiology first.

This literary review embarks on a journey through historical contexts, textual analysis of *Ayurvedic* classics, *Dravyas* and the profound connection between the mind and body to illuminate the significance of *Pranavaha Srotas* in promoting overall health status.

Additionally, *Ayurveda* recognizes the mind:body connection in respiratory functioning. Stress, emotional factors, and mental imbalance can influence *Pranavaha Srotas*. Practices like *Pranayama* (breath control) and meditation are recommended to foster mental equilibrium and enhance overall respiratory function.

The word ‘*Prana*’ is derived from the Sanskrit word “An” with a prefix “*Pra*”. “An” means to breath, to live ^[1] One of the meanings of the root “*Pra*” is to fulfil ^[2], where as one of the meanings of “*Na*” is the nasal. Thus, the whole word *Prana* means

the fulfilment through the nasal part, which is necessary for the prolongation of life. *Aachrya Sushruta* has described in *Sushrut Samhita Dwadash Pranas*.^[3]

In *Ayurvedic* Compendia, *Prana* is pivotal term used for vitality element as well as for type of *Vata Dosha*. According to *Gayadasa* (Critic of *Sushrutsamhita*), *Murdha*, *Kantha* and *Nasika* are *Sthana* of *Pranavayu*.

Sushrutacharya explained in *Nidansthana*, that the *Vayu*, that courses in the cavity of the mouth, is called the *Prana*. Its functions (deglutition) being to force down the food into the cavity of stomach & to support the different vitalizing principles of the body. In *Ayurveda*, the *Nishwas* function of *Pranavayu* is held responsible for the process of respiration in human body. According to *Chakrapani*, (*Deha Tantrayate*) to control the body ,its movements is one of the functions of *Pranavayu*. *Buddhidhruk* which means control over *Buddhi* is also one of the functions of *Pranavayu*. *Buddhi* means intellectual power and *Buddhidhruk* function means control over *Buddhi*. *Sushrutacharya* explained in *Nidanasthana*, that vitiation of *Pranavayu* is usually followed by the symptoms of respiratory diseases like hic:cough (*Hikka*), Dyspnoea (*Shwasa*) & other similar diseases.

Srotas is the concept in which there are more of physiological deliberations than anatomical one. *Srotas* are defined as the passages (cavities) through which the various elements, *Dhatus* (tissues) undergo the process of metabolic transformation. *Srotas* have also been described to be the

structure from which the contents flow, move out or ooze out. If *Srotas* gets vitiated then the *Dhatu*, element flowing through it also gets vitiated. Each *Srotas* is connected with a specific anatomical structure is called as *Moolasthanas* of that *Srotas*. These *Moolasthanas* of *Srotas* are explained according to their function and storage of that particular element (*Bhava*).

Aacharya Chakrapani in their commentary have described *Pranavaha Srotas* is the channels which carry *Vata* i.e. *Pranavayu*.^[4]

Charakacharya had mentioned in *Vimanshana* 5/9 that if there is vitiation of *Pranavaha Srotas* then there is vitiation of *Pranavayu* also which is carried by *Pranavaha Srotas* and vice versa.

Need and Rationale of Study:

1. To compile the references and description regarding *Pranavaha Srotas*.
2. In *Ayurveda*, a system that harmonizes the *Sharir*, *Mana*, and *Atma*, *Pranavaha srotas* emerges as a thread intricately woven into the fabric of respiratory health. This review endeavours to explore and dissect the nuances of this vital channel, tracing its significance through the annals of time.

Aim – To understand the basic concept of *Pranavaha Srotas*, its *Moolasthanas*, *Dushti Hetu* and *Lakshana* explained in *Ayurvedic Compendia*.

Objectives:

1. To understand the *Pranavaha Srotas* explained in *Ayurvedic Compendia*.
2. To compile the references given in *Samhitas* regarding *Pranavaha Srotas*.

Material and Methods:

1. Literary review for *Pranavaha Srotas*, its *Moolasthanas*, *Dushti Hetu* and *Lakshana* from the basic *Samhitas* of *Ayurveda*, *Brihatrayi* and *Laghutrayi*.
2. Supportive text books for guideline.
3. References from searching internet and various journals.

Type of study:

It is a fundamental study, literary review of *Pranavaha Srotas* and its *Moolasthanas*, *Dushti Hetu* and *Lakshana* given in *Ayurvedic Compendia*.

Observations and Result:

The *Ayurvedic* literature contains numerous references regarding importance of *Prana*. According to *Parashar Hrishikesh*, firstly *Nabhi* is to be developed in foetus. According to *Chakrapani*, *Prana* is nothing but life. **Literary meaning of *Prana* is Life.** It explains the role of *Pranavayu* in maintaining integrity of human body and soul which according to *Ayurveda* is called *Ayu*.

Prime location of *Pranavayu*: The main location of *Pranavayu* according to *Charaka*

Samhita, Ashtangasangrah & Ashtanghridaya is *Murdha*.

According to *Vagbhatacharya*, *Prana vayu* resides at *Murdha* & moves through chest & throat. It is responsible for the noble function of *Dharana* of *Buddhi, Hridaya, Chitta & Indriya*. *Acharya Hemadri* has clarified that *Murdha* is *Avasthiti Sthanam* i.e. residential site of *Prana & Ura & Kantha* are *Vicharana Sthanam* i.e. place for movement. With a marked difference *Sushrutcharya* explained that *Vayu* which moves in mouth is called as *Prana Vayu*. It is responsible for *Dharana* of *Deha*. *Prana* facilitates deglutition of food in *Aamashaya* & is also responsible for the noble function of *Avalambana* of *Prana* i.e. vital element of body. *Dalhana* adds that *Murdha, kantha, nasika* are too site of *Prana vayu*. *Dalhana* further explained that *Avalambana* of *Prana* is nothing but *Avalambana* of 12 elements, for example, *Prana* (*Agni, Soma* etc.). *Vagbhatacharya* has explained specific *Dushti Hetu* for all types of *Vata Dosha*. According to him *Prana vayu* gets vitiated because of *Raukshya, Vyayama, Langhana, Ati Aahara, Abhighat, Adhwa & Vega Udirana*.

Functions of Pranavayu:

Functions of *Pranavayu* are very much vital, without which one cannot be able to survive. *Pranavayu* controls *Buddhi* (intellect), *Hridaydhruk* (Cardiac activity), *Indriyadhruk* (sensory & motor functions), *Chittadhruk* (mind), *Shthivan* (spitting), *Kshavathu* (sneezing), *Udgar* (belching), *Nishwas* (inspiration) & *Annapravesha* (deglutition)^[5].

Prana Vayu is also called as '*Dehadhrika*'^[6] which holds the body by virtue of the functions it performs.

Definition and significance of Pranavaha Srotas:

Among all the *Srotas* ***Pranavaha Srotas*** is one of the most important systems in the body. *Pranavahanam Srotasam* means the *Srotas* which carries *Pranavayu*. *Charakacharya* has explained that *Pranavaha Srotas* are the channels or tracts through which *Pranavayu* flows^[7]. Therefore, *Pranavaha Srotas* stands for the system concerned with activities of *Pranavayu*. According to *Ayurvedic* compendia, *Moolasthanas* of *Pranavaha Srotas* are *Hridaya, Mahasrotas* and *Rasavahi Dhamani*.

According to *Charakacharya*, the *Moolasthanas* of *Pranavaha Srotas* are *Hridaya* and *Mahasrotas*.^[8] *Charakacharya* mentioned that synonym of *Mahasrotas* is *Koshtha*. *Sushrutcharya* mentioned that *Koshtha* includes *Amashaya, Agnyashaya, Hridaya, Unduka, Phuppusa* etc.

Gangadhara clarified that *Mahasrotas* is '*mahachhidram mahasaranam*'. This simply implies alimentary canal, the whole canal starting from *Mukha* and end up to *Guda*. It is inclusive of *Annavaha Srotas & Purishavaha Srotas* and is the seat of most important physiological entity of body i.e. *Jatharagni*. *Mahasrotas* is an important site of two highly praiseworthy physiological entities *Dosha* and *Agni*. In *Ayurveda*, consideration for the entity for digestion and

metabolism in our body is *Agni*. Term *Agni* is relevant for all physiological entities responsible for the term digestion of food (*Ahara*) and all metabolic processes. *Jatharagni* is the main cause of life, strength, complexion, nourishment, lustre, *Teja*, *Oja*, and *Prana*. *Mahasrotas* is place of *Jatharagni*, place for process of *Awasthapaka*, place for *Udirana* of *Dosha*, itself a *Abhyantara Roga Marga* and a body channel via *Vamana*, *Virechana* & *Basti* are done.

According to *Sushrutacharya*, the *Moolasthanas* of *Pranavaha Srotas* are *Hridaya* and *Rasavahini Dhamanis*.^[9]

Pranavaha Srotas vitiated due to *Kshayat* (depletion of tissue), *Sandharanat* (forcibly with holding the natural body reflexes or urges), *Raukshyat* means *Atiruksha annasevan*, *Vyayamata Kshudhitasya* (excessive exercise in presence of hunger), *Anya Daruna Karya* (doing many such activity which are beyond ones physical capacity) etc.^[10]

According to *Ayurveda*, *Pranavaha Srotodushti Lakshana* includes *Atisrushta* (fast/speedy), *Atibaddha* (obstructed), *Kupita* (vitiating), *Alpalpa* (shallow), *Abheekshana* (increased frequency), *Sashabda* (with specific sound), *Sashoola* (painful), *Uchawas* (expiration).^[11]

Discussion :

Ayurveda, with its roots deeply embedded in ancient wisdom, introduces us to a holistic approach to health. At the core of this philosophy lies the concept of

Doshas, elemental forces governing the body. Unveiling the anatomical and physiological aspects of *Pranavaha Srotas* reveals its integral role in maintaining equilibrium within the body.

To comprehend the essence of *Pranavaha Srotas*, one must delve into the sacred texts of *Ayurveda* – *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*. These timeless classics provide a detailed roadmap, guiding us through key passages that unravel the ancient understanding of *Nishwas*, *Prana*, and their profound connection to overall well-being. The wisdom embedded in these texts bridges the gap between antiquity and modern comprehension.

Pranavaha Srotas plays very crucial and multidimensional role by virtue of the most vital substance it carries through it i.e. *Pranavayu*. The *Moolasthanas* of *Pranavaha Srotas* are *Hridaya* and *Mahasrotas* are vitiated due to vitiation of *Pranavayu* which is carried by *Pranavaha Srotas*.

Acharya Charaka and *Sushruta* both had mentioned the *Moolasthanas* of *Pranavaha Srotas* is mainly *Hridaya* because of its *Pranavahan Karma* (blood circulation).

Mind:Body Connection and *Pranavaha Srotas*:The mind:body connection takes centre stage as we explore the intricate interplay between mental and emotional states and respiratory health. *Ayurveda*, recognizing this symbiotic relationship, prescribes practices such as *Pranayama* and meditation

This literary review concludes by underscoring the holistic approach of *Ayurveda* toward respiratory health. The comprehensive clarity, understanding of *Pranavaha Srotas* provided by ancient *Ayurvedic* texts serves as a valuable guide for contemporary healthcare, emphasizing preventive measures and personalized wellness strategies.

Conclusion:

As we conclude this literary exploration, the tapestry of *Pranavaha Srotas* in *Ayurveda* unfolds as a testament to the holistic brilliance of this ancient system, collective information regarding *Pranavaha Srotas*. The recapitulation of key findings underscores *Ayurveda's* inherent approach to understanding and promoting respiratory health.

Pranavaha Srotas basically studied with the correlation of respiratory system but as *Charakacharya* explained the *Moolasthanas* of *Pranavaha Srotas*, it should be studied with the correlation of cardiovascular system (transportation of *Pranavayu*), nervous system (regarding regulation of respiration) and GIT i.e. Gastrointestinal system (alimentary canal means *Mahasrotas* which is the origin site of *Pranavaha Srotodushstijanya Vyadhi* i.e. diseases of *Pranavaha Srotas* like *Shwasa*, *Hikka* etc.).

Embracing the holistic principles of *Ayurveda* becomes paramount in fostering a comprehensive approach to overall well-being of human being. The article concludes with a call to action, urging further research and the integration of

Ayurvedic principles into modern healthcare for a harmonious synergy between ancient wisdom and contemporary science.

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