



“HETU AND LAKṢAṆA OF RASAVAHA SROTAS DUṢṬI IN PATIENTS OF ISCHEMIC HEART DISEASE – AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE”

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ABSTRACT **Background:** In Ayurvedic literature, *Rasavaha Srotas* plays a pivotal role in the nourishment and sustenance of the body. Its vitiation (*srotodushti*) has been linked with various systemic disorders. Among them, *Hṛdroga* described in classics closely resembles Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD) in contemporary medicine. The etiological factors (*hetu*) and clinical manifestations (*lakṣaṇa*) of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* show significant correlation with the pathogenesis and symptomatology of IHD. **Aim:** To analyze the *hetu* (causative factors) and *lakṣaṇa* (clinical features) of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* in patients of Ischemic Heart Disease and to explore their clinical relevance. **Methods:** Classical Ayurvedic texts were critically reviewed for descriptions of *Rasavaha Srotodushti*. Clinical data of patients diagnosed with IHD were observed to identify parallels between Ayurvedic symptomatology and modern clinical presentation. The causative dietary, lifestyle, and psychological factors were assessed in light of *Rasavaha Srotodushti hetu*. **Results:** The predominant *hetu* observed were *ati-guru ahara sevana* (excessive intake of heavy food), *ati-sneha sevana* (excessive fatty/oily food), sedentary lifestyle, stress, and suppression of natural urges. The *lakṣaṇa* correlated with IHD included *hrid-graha* (cardiac discomfort), *shoola* (chest pain), *shwasa* (dyspnea), *murchha* (syncope), *klama* (fatigue), and *gatrashayitva* (heaviness in body). These findings revealed a strong association between Ayurvedic concepts of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* and the clinical features of ischemic heart disease. **Conclusion:** The *hetu* and *lakṣaṇa* of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* provide a comprehensive Ayurvedic framework for understanding Ischemic Heart Disease. Correlating classical descriptions with modern clinical presentations enhances the scope of integrative research and opens avenues for preventive as well as therapeutic strategies rooted in Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS : Rasavaha Srotas, Srotodushti, Hetu, Lakshana, Hridroga, Ischemic Heart Disease, Ayurveda

INTRODUCTION

The concept of *Srotas* forms the fundamental basis of Ayurvedic physiology, being the channels responsible for the transport of *rasa* and other dhātus throughout the body. Among them, *Rasavaha Srotas* is considered of prime importance as it carries the *āhārarasa*, the essential nutrient fraction, which provides sustenance to all tissues and governs the vitality of the body¹. The vitiation (*srotodushti*) of *Rasavaha Srotas* leads to a cascade of pathological changes that ultimately manifest as systemic disorders, among which *Hṛdroga* is prominently described².

Classical Ayurvedic texts identify *āhāraja hetu* (dietary factors) like excessive intake of heavy, unctuous, and incompatible foods, *vihāraja hetu* (lifestyle factors) such as sedentary habits, excessive sleep, and suppression of natural urges, along with *mānasika hetu* (psychological factors) like stress, grief, and anger, as primary causes for *Rasavaha Srotodushti*³. These causative factors closely resemble the modern risk factors for Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD), including high-fat diet, lack of physical activity, obesity, hypertension, and psychosocial stress⁴.

The clinical manifestations of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* such as *hṛdgourava* (heaviness in the heart), *hṛdvyatha* (pain in the cardiac region), *śvāsa* (dyspnea), *mūrcchā* (syncope), and *klama* (fatigue) show striking similarity with the symptomatology of IHD⁵. In modern science, IHD is defined as a condition caused by an imbalance between myocardial oxygen supply and demand, most commonly due to atherosclerotic obstruction of the coronary arteries⁶. Globally, it remains the leading cause of morbidity and mortality, accounting for an estimated 9 million deaths annually according to the World Health Organization⁷.

Thus, a critical evaluation of *hetu* and *lakṣaṇa* of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* in relation to IHD not only validates Ayurvedic concepts but also provides scope for preventive and therapeutic strategies through an integrative approach.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted on patients diagnosed with Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD) based on clinical evaluation and standard

diagnostic criteria⁸. A detailed history was taken with special reference to dietary habits, lifestyle patterns, and psychological factors to identify *hetu* (causative factors) of *Rasavaha Srotodushti*. Clinical manifestations were observed and compared with *lakṣaṇa* described in Ayurvedic texts. Relevant classical references were critically reviewed from *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and *Madhava Nidana*. Modern literature, including standard cardiology textbooks and WHO reports, was referred to establish correlation with IHD.

Ayurveda describes the *Rasavaha Srotas* as the primary channel responsible for the transport of *āhāra-rasa* (nutrient essence), which nourishes the body and supports *prāṇa*, *ojas* and overall vitality. Its root structures (*mūla sthāna*) are considered to be the *hṛdaya* (heart) and *dasha dhamanīs* (major vessels), indicating a close correlation with the cardiovascular system. Any disturbance in the integrity or function of this channel results in *srotodushti*, which manifests as a range of systemic disorders. Among them, *Hṛdroga* described in classics shows striking similarity with Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD).

Hetu (Causative Factors) of Rasavaha Srotodushti in IHD

The etiological factors responsible for *Rasavaha Srotodushti* can be classified as:

1. Āhāraja Hetu (Dietary Causes):

- o Excessive consumption of *guru* (heavy), *snigdha* (unctuous), and *abhojana* (irregular meals).
- o Intake of *madhura rasa* predominant diet (excess sugar, sweets, refined carbohydrates).
- o *Viruddhāhāra* (incompatible food combinations such as fish with milk, curd with meat).
- o Overeating and frequent intake of junk/processed foods.

2. Vihāraja Hetu (Lifestyle Causes):

- o Sedentary lifestyle and lack of physical activity.
- o Excessive sleep, particularly day sleep (*divāsvapna*).
- o Suppression of natural urges (*vegadharana*).
- o Irregular daily routine and overexertion.

3. Mānasika Hetu (Psychological Causes):

- o Chronic stress, worry, grief, fear, and anger.
- o Suppression of emotions leading to psychosomatic imbalance.

4. Other Factors:

- o Ageing (*jīrṇāvasthā*), hereditary predisposition, indulgence in alcohol, smoking, and other *asuddha ācharaṇa* (unwholesome activities).

Lakṣaṇa (Clinical Features) of Rasavaha Srotodushti in IHD

The classical symptoms of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* correspond remarkably with the clinical presentation of IHD:

- *Hṛd-graha* / *Hṛdyathā* – tightness or pain in the cardiac region (angina).
- *Hṛd-gourava* – heaviness in the heart.
- *Śvāsa* – breathlessness on exertion or at rest.
- *Klama* – easy fatigability and weakness.
- *Mūrchā* – syncope or fainting spells.
- *Gātra-śaithilya* – generalized weakness and sluggishness.
- *Trishna* – excessive thirst due to impaired circulation.
- *Stambha* – stiffness or restricted movements due to poor perfusion.

Correlation With Ischemic Heart Disease

In modern science, IHD is caused primarily by atherosclerotic narrowing of the coronary arteries, leading to reduced blood flow and oxygen supply to the myocardium. The risk factors include high-fat diet, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, diabetes, hypertension, smoking, and stress—factors that overlap with the *hetu* described for *Rasavaha Srotodushti*. Similarly, the angina pain, dyspnea, fatigue, and syncope of IHD correspond to the *lakṣaṇa* outlined in Ayurvedic texts.

DISCUSSION

The *Rasavaha Srotas* holds a central position in Ayurvedic physiology, being responsible for the transport of *āhāra-rasa* that nourishes all tissues. Its *mūla sthāna* is described as *hṛdaya* (heart) and *dasha dhamanī* (major vessels), which closely correspond to the anatomical and physiological concepts of the cardiovascular system. Disturbance in these channels leads to *srotodushti*, manifested through specific *hetu* (causes) and *lakṣaṇa* (clinical features).

Ayurvedic Perspective

The classical *hetu* of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* include excessive consumption of *guru* (heavy), *snigdha* (unctuous), *madhura* (sweet) and *viruddha ahara* (incompatible foods), along with lack of exercise, indulgence in day sleep, and chronic psychological stress. These factors impair *agni* (digestive and metabolic fire), leading to formation of *āma* (undigested toxic metabolites). *Āma*, in turn, circulates through the *rasavaha srotas*, causing obstruction (*sanga*), vitiation of *doṣas* (mainly *kapha* and *vāta*), and impaired nourishment of the *hṛdaya*. This pathological sequence results in *hṛdgourava*, *hṛdyathā*, *shwāsa*, *klama*, and other symptoms described in Ayurvedic classics.

Modern Correlation

These Ayurvedic *hetu* and *lakṣaṇa* show a close correlation with the modern understanding of Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD). High-fat, high-calorie diet, sedentary lifestyle, and stress are well-established risk factors for atherosclerosis, the underlying cause of IHD. The concept of *āma* leading to obstruction can be compared with lipid deposition and plaque formation in the coronary arteries. The *kapha* dominance reflects increased cholesterol and lipid accumulation, whereas *vāta* vitiation explains the acute ischemic events, pain, and irregularity in cardiac function.

The symptoms of IHD such as chest pain, heaviness, breathlessness, fatigue, syncope, and generalized weakness parallel the Ayurvedic *lakṣaṇa* of *Rasavaha Srotodushti*. The overlap suggests that Ayurvedic descriptions were an early recognition of ischemic pathology in the heart, long before the development of modern investigative tools.

Holistic Understanding

The Ayurvedic model provides a multidimensional view:

- **Causation:** Integrating *āhāra*, *vihāra*, and *mānasika hetu* highlights the role of diet, lifestyle, and mind in disease progression.
- **Pathogenesis:** The concept of *āma* and *doṣa-prakopa* offers a functional explanation of how improper metabolism and lifestyle lead to obstruction and ischemia.
- **Clinical Features:** The parallel between *lakṣaṇa* of *srotodushti* and IHD demonstrates the timeless clinical relevance of Ayurvedic observations.

Implications For Management

Understanding IHD through the lens of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* emphasizes the importance of preventive measures such as wholesome diet, regular exercise, stress management, and proper daily routine. Therapeutic approaches like *dīpana-pācana* (enhancing digestion and metabolism), *srotoshodhana* (cleansing channels), *hṛidya dravyas* (cardioprotective herbs), and *rasāyana* therapy may provide supportive care alongside modern management.

CONCLUSION

The concept of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* described in Ayurveda provides a holistic framework to understand the pathogenesis of Ischemic Heart Disease. The *hetu* such as unwholesome diet, sedentary lifestyle, and psychological stress show striking resemblance to the modern risk factors of IHD. Similarly, the *lakṣaṇa* of *Rasavaha Srotodushti* like *hṛdyathā*, *hṛdgourava*, *śvāsa*, *klama*, and *mūrchā* directly correlate with the clinical presentation of angina, dyspnea, fatigue, and syncope in IHD. This convergence highlights the timelessness and scientific foresight of Ayurvedic principles.

By bridging the Ayurvedic and modern perspectives, it becomes evident that prevention and management of IHD requires a comprehensive approach targeting dietary regulation, lifestyle modification, mental health balance, and therapeutic interventions that purify and strengthen the *srotas*. Thus, integrating Ayurvedic principles of *Rasavaha Srotas* with contemporary cardiology can open new avenues for preventive, promotive, and supportive strategies against one of the most significant global health challenges.

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