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NABHI IS THE CENTRE OF PRANA: A REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

There are many concepts in Ayurvedic science which are not yet fully understood & nabhi is one of these concepts. The central point of body in between Amashaya (location of undigested food) and Pakvashaya (location of digested food) is termed as Nabhi. In classical texts of Ayurveda; scattered references regarding Nabhi are available like Nabhi is mentioned as a vital spot (Marma) of body. Nabhi is also included among the fifteen Koshtangas of body. In Sharirasthana of Sushruta Samhita; Acharya Sushruta mentioned that Sira and Dhamani are originated from Nabhi. Acharya Vagbhatta has quoted Nabhi as a dominant place of Pitta Dosha. Nabhi is an abode of Pranas (vital energy). These vessels are the nutrient passages and act as channels for showering sustenance to different parts of our body. Because of its intense importance all most all acharyas of Ayurveda has considered nabhi is an important structure in the body and centre of all the organs of the body.

KEYWORDS Sira, Prana, Umbilicus, Marma, Fetu

INTRODUCTION

The word Prana has a vast meaning. Prana is the life force that enters the body at birth, travels through all the parts of the body and leaves at moment of death. Prana is the key concept of Ayurveda. Ancient literature like Veda, Upanishads, tantra, purana, samhitas are rich source of information about prana. The word prana is derived from the word "An" with presuffix "pra" and "ac" and "Ghan". At other places, some gives it derivation as the root pr-pranati and piparti meaning to fill, to nourish, to satiate and is thus related to purna (fullness).

Acharaya Sushruta stated that Agni, Soma, Vayu, Satwa, Raja, Tama, Panchendriya and Atma are the Prana. [7] Main place of Prana is Nabhi which is a network of Shira. The bodily Vayu is classified as Prana, Udana, Samana, Vyana and Apana. These five classes of Vayu, located in their specific region contribute towards the integration and maintenance of the body. Acharya Sushruta has described that Prana Vayu is Vaktra Sanchari (circulate in oral cavity). Its vitiation causes hiccough and Swasa rog. In commentary of Acharya Dalhan, he said that the field and action of Prana Vayu includes the reason of the heart, throat, head and nose.

Each part of the body has its own importance. Nabhi is a very important part among them. It is the centre of all the organs of the body. The description about nabhi is present in ancient system of medicine. The anatomical, physiological as well as pathological concepts about

nabhi are broadly mentioned in Ayurveda samhitas.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Caraka and Sushruta are considered nabhi as important structure in the body that contains prana. Caraka and Vagbhata included nabhi in dasa pranayatana and they considered nabhi is a koshtanga. Sushruta was included nabhi in 107 Marmas. He said that nabhi is sira Marma and sadya pranahara marma.

A. Nabhi sthana (Anatomical Situation of nabhi) The place of nabhi is udara (abdomen) and present in between the amashaya and pakvashaya.

B. Nabhi as a prabhava sthana of sira

Nabhi is said to be the prabhava sthana i.e., the site of origin of the dhamanis and siras. In fetal life siras supply the nutrition to the fetus through nabhi nadi (umbilical cord). After birth these siras do not exist anymore. That is why Sushruta has labeled them "nabhi prabhava". Regarding relation of siras with nabhi; Sushruta has described that siras connected to the nabhi spreads all over the human body. The prana of an individual exists in the nabhi and nabhi itself is concerned with prana. The nabhi is surrounded by siras from all sides like spokes arising from centre of wheel. In Sharira sthana Sushruta has described that siras originating from the nabhi, spread through the entire body, just like water spreads from the rhizome of lotus plant to its stalk of the lotus flower. In Sharira sthana 3rd

chapter Sushruta said that the nabhi nadi remains attached to the rasavaha nadi of the fetus and this nabhi nadi carries ahararasa virya (nutrition) from the mother to the garbha.

C. Nabhi as a pitta sthana or jyothi sthana

Nabhi is one of the sites of pitta. According to Sushruta the garbha develops due to rasa and marutadhmana (flow of vata). Nabhi is called jyothi sthana and the agni in the nabhi of the garbha fanned by vayu. The same vayu in combination with the agni spreads in srotas in vertical, horizontal and oblique direction and thus growth of the garbha takes place. Dalhana explains the term maruta dhmana by saying "vata entering into the srotas (sira) in dhatus of the fetus causes their dilatation, thus providing space for its growth". Here two factors are responsible for the development of the fetus-1. Mother's ahararasa .Vayu with agni. Here nabhi is considered as the jyothi sthana for the place of agni. Vagbhata has considered the agni lies between nabhi and hrudaya. The garbha gets nutrition through nabhi nadi. For this it seems Sushruta has used the word rasa nimitta and maruta dhmana. Here the term srotas is interpreted for veins and arteries of the umbilical cord

D. Nabhi as a main structure in garbha poshana

This is described more clearly in Ashtanga Sangraha. Vagbhata said that when all organs and parts of the fetus become well developed, a nadi

connects the nabhi of the fetus with the apara which in turn gets connected with the mother's hrudaya. The nutrient portion of the food (rasa) travels from the mother's hrudaya carried through the dhamanis and reaches the apara and from there to the nabhi. Then it goes to the pakvashaya where it undergoes further digestion by the kayagni comprised mainly of rasa and nourishes all the tissues¹. According to Caraka fetus takes its nourishment through the nabhi nadi (umbilical cord). The nabhi of the fetus is connected to the apara by nabhi nadi. The apara is in its turn connected with the hrudaya of the mother. The heart of the mother floods the apara by the pulsating sira. This Rasa promotes strength and complexion of the fetus¹

E. Nabhi as a prana

Sushruta has described that the prana of an individual exists in the nabhi and nabhi itself is concerned with prana .According to Ayurveda rakta is considered as prana and jiva. Rakta is the one of dhatu and gives nutrition to the body. The prana is supplied to the body through rakta. The rakta is formed from ahararasa and flows in siras for maintains of life activities. Vagbhata said that the life retains as long as rakta retains. Sharangadhara has described that the rakta exists all over the body and is the best supporter of life. According Caraka living creatures are endowed with bala (strength), varna (complexion), sukha (happiness) and ayush (longevity) due to pure blood. Rakta plays a vital role in the

substance of vital structures. Cakrapani in his commentary of Caraka suthra sthana 30th chapter said that main function of the blood is jivana. It is a synonym for ayu or life. Jivana is explained as one which causes dharana of life. Blood is stated to be the mula of the body as it causes the dharana of the body.

F.Chakra nabhi

Sushruta described that the nabhi surrounded by siras from all sides like spokes arising from centre of wheel. According to Ayurveda root of siras is nabhi, because from nabhi they spread upwards, downwards and obliquely. They nourish the body like river and streams in term of Jala harini. According to Yoga philosophy, in Shadchakras the third chakra is manipura. It is situated in nabhi region. This chakra is also called as nabhi chakra. In this context the word mani is used in the sense of agni. Both mani and agni have tejas property.

G. Nabhi as a marma

The science of Ayurveda has described marmas with immense importance as they are the vital spots that can cause serious-ill effects to the individual health. Nabhi marma is one among the 107 marmas explained in the science. If injured, it can lead to immediate death or death within 7 days. It is single in number, belonging to the abdominal region. This marmas structurally made of sira, and is of one's own palm size in area (4 Angulas). Based on location, it lies between pakvashaya and Amashaya

DISCUSSION

The above descriptions claim lot of importance in connection to the functional, clinical, embryological and structural aspects of nabhi. In this literature an effort is made to show and exhibit the nabhi compared with modern anatomical structure by referring all the classics and sangrahakaras. The modern correlations on umbilicus provided by the different scholars vary in many ways. It is translated as umbilicus, whole of anterior abdomen, inferior epigatric vessels and rectus abdominis muscle. It is correlated to abdominal-aorta and inferior vena cava by some. But Anatomical, physiological and pathologically in both Ayurvedic and modern it is came to know that nabhi is umbilicus. Nabhi is structurally very important structure in the body and it contains prana. The following points suggests vital importance of nabhi- Anatomical situation of nabhi is in abdomen and present in between the amashaya and pakvashaya. According to modern anatomy the position of the umbilicus is variable. In healthy adults it lies in the anterior median plane of abdomen, at the level of the disc between the third and fourth lumbar vertebrae. It is lower in infants and in person with a pendulous abdomen. Nabhi as a prabhava sthana of dhaman is and siras-nabhi is considered as the originating source for vessels present in between the amashaya and pakvashaya. These vessels are the nutrient passages as for example for

the nourishment of the land humans are conducting water irrigation by furrows from thousands of years in the same way these vessels act as channels for showering sustenance to different parts of our body. Nabhi is called as sira mula or root of veins or blood vessels in the body. Anatomically we do not see any veins or arteries being connected or getting originated from the nabhi. But the connectivity to the sira is explained on the basis of fetal circulation. Thus nabhi is sira mula and mula for our existence. Physiologically nabhi is a pitta sthana or jyothi sthana¹³. It may be due to the proximity of the digestive organs with nabhi that it is considered as pitta sthana. The digestive tract, mainly the stomach and small intestine (with liver and pancreas) mainly function with the help of pitta, the fire element. The fire element or agni tatwa is said to be represented in the body in the form of pitta. Nabhi is closely related to agni or pachakagni in the body. Therefore nabhi is also an agni sthana. Grahani is situated at umbilical area or at nabhi, which shelters agni. It is situated in between amashaya and pakvashaya like a bolt or latch. This also bears pittadhara kalain which agni is placed. Thus nabhi represents agni. Nabhi is a main structure in garbha poshana. During fetal circulation, the blood vessels which connect the child and mother, carrying nutrients to the child pass through the umbilicus of the child. Thus Navel has been a root of circulation in the earlier days of the child and is thus considered responsible for our existence and survival. If fetal circulation is hampered due to

any defects of circulation system or blocks or inadequate nutrients from mother, we can find the child to be born with deformities and birth defects, stunted growth or intra-uterine death. In this way all the blood vessels enter the body of the fetus through umbilicus and spread all over the body of the fetus and give nutrition to the fetus. So umbilicus is a very important structure in fetal life. Nabhi is one of the pranayatana and it naturally contains prana. The prana is supplied to the fetal body through rakta. According to modern medical science, oxygen transportation is the function of blood. Oxygen is the prana vayu. As blood is the transporting agent of prana vayu, as it is circulated from the nabhi, nabhi is the mula of prana vahana and thus by supplying prana to the whole body, nabhi does the jivana karma. In fetal life umbilical cord is only connection in between mother and the fetus. It connects placenta of the mother to the umbilicus of the fetus. Oxygenated blood is carried by umbilical veins from placenta of mother to the fetus. These veins enter the fetus body through umbilicus. So nabhi is an important structure in fetus and it is considered as prana. In fetus umbilical cord connects to the nabhi. It contains one vein and two arteries. Umbilical vein after entering into the body of the fetus goes upwards and divided into right and left branches. Umbilical arteries are two in number, these carry deoxygenated blood from the fetus to the placenta of mother. This is a branch from the internal iliac arteries and lead to the placenta through umbilicus. Umbilical veins and its

branches and umbilical arteries look like wheel appearance at the nabhi. After birth with reference to the lymphatic and venous drainage the level of the umbilicus is a water-shed. Lymph and venous blood flow upwards above the plane of the umbilicus; and downwards below this plane. The umbilicus is one of the important sites at which tributaries of the portal vein anastomose with systemic veins (porto-caval anastomoses). In portal hypertension these anastomoses open up to form dilated veins radiating from the umbilicus (caput medusae). Above modern anatomical statements also it proves that nabhi is surrounded by siras. Hence nabhi is considered as chakra nabhi. According to Yogic science the manipura chakra situates at nabhi. This Chakra is anatomically considered as the celiac plexus. The celiac plexus is the largest of autonomic nerve plexuses, also known as the solar plexus, because of its location in the center of the body (at the level of umbilicus) where radiating nerve fibers extend in all directions to the important abdominal organs. The celiac plexus is sometimes referred to as the abdominal brain because of its location and function. The celiac plexus is a network of nerve fibers located in the abdomen, which is composed of grey and white brain matter similar to that of the cerebrum. It sends and receives impulses and signals to the other organs in the abdomen. The celiac plexus is responsible for the nutritional distribution to the other organs. Injury to the celiac plexus often paralyzes the entire body and if the injury is bad

enough may lead to death. So it is known as the body's power house and which contains its life force

CONCLUSION

Nabhi is a structure from where something arises or generates which is taken to the center like the axis from where the spokes arise, to go to the periphery. This place is very important in Ayurveda. From this place the umbilical cord begins in fetus. Nabhi is considered as sadyapranahara marma. Not only that, but all the dhamani and sira also originate from nabhi which are transporting ahara rasa and dosha from nabhi to all over the body. In the same manner abnormal ahara rasa and dosha are also taken to various parts of the body. So the mode of basic pathogenesis is closely related to this place. The drug after the action of agni that is after getting digested properly, are transferred through the same path. So nabhi is having prime importance in physiology, pathology and in medicine also in Ayurveda.

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