



“Exploring the Channel of Mind: A Critical Review of Manovāha Srotas with Special Reference to Brain and Apasmāra (Epilepsy)”

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How to Cite this Article:

Tiwari, R. G. (2026). "Exploring the Channel of Mind: A Critical Review of Manovāha Srotas with Special Reference to Brain and Apasmāra (Epilepsy)". International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management, 2(6).

<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i6.415>

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<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i6.415>

Abstract

In Ayurvedic physiology, *Srotas* (channels) form the basis of systemic function and disease manifestation. Among these, *Manovāha Srotas*—the subtle pathway of the mind—is described as responsible for cognitive, emotional, and psychological activities. The disturbance of this channel leads to *Manas Vikara* (mental disorders), of which *Apasmāra* (epilepsy) is a prime example. Understanding *Manovāha Srotas* through the lens of brain function offers valuable insight into the Ayurvedic view of neurological and psychiatric disorders.

Keywords: Manovāha Srotas, *Apasmāra*, Epilepsy, Brain correlation, *Srotas Dushti*, *Manas Vikara*.

Introduction

In the Ayurvedic tradition, the concept of *srotas* (channels or conduits) is fundamental in the understanding of physiology and pathology. The term *srotas* literally means “that which flows” and refers to pathways through which doshas (Vāta, Pitta, Kapha), dhātus (tissues) and malas (waste products) are transported.

Among these, the concept of the *Manovāha Srotas* (literally “mind-carrying channels”) has been discussed in the context of mental and neurological disorders. It is through this channel that the *manas* (mind/mental faculty), *buddhi* (intellect), *smṛti* (memory) etc., are believed to function.

In classical texts the disease *Apasmāra* is considered to correspond broadly to what modern medicine recognises as epilepsy (and seizure disorders). Ayurvedic authors describe *Apasmāra* as the loss of memory or consciousness accompanied by convulsions, and mention that one of the loci of its pathology is the vitiation/obstruction of the *Manovāha Srotas*.

Given the continuing burden of epilepsy, and the interest in integrative or complementary therapeutic approaches, it is useful to review the concept of the *Manovāha Srotas* in relation to brain-mind functioning, and specifically



how it is implicated in Apasmāra in Ayurvedic classics and modern research.

Aims Objectives

Aim: To critically review the concept of Manovāha Srotas with respect to its role in brain-mind functioning, and to examine its relevance to Apasmāra (epilepsy) in classical Ayurvedic texts.

Objectives:

1. To compile and interpret classical Ayurvedic references to Manovāha Srotas (from Charaka, Sushruta, Bhela) regarding its location, functions, and pathogenesis.
2. To describe the definition, origin, site (ādhishthāna) and functions of Manovāha Srotas as per classical Ayurvedic literature.
3. To examine the etiopathogenesis (nidāna C samprāpti) of Apasmāra in relation to Manovāha Srotas.
4. To summarise classical Ayurvedic management strategies of Apasmāra (with reference to Manovāha Srotas) and correlate with modern perspectives on epilepsy.

Methodology

A narrative-literature review design was adopted. The classical Ayurvedic texts — Charaka Samhitā, Sushruta Samhitā and Bhela Samhitā — were examined for references to Manovāha Srotas, its site, functions and involvement in mental

disorders including Apasmāra. Secondary sources comprising peer-reviewed journal articles on Manovāha Srotas, its brain correlation, and Apasmāra were retrieved via online databases. Key search terms included “Manovaha Srotas”,

“Apasmara”, “Manas vyadhi”, “brain correlation Ayurveda”, “srotas neurology”. Data were extracted and synthesised under thematic headings (definition, site, functions, pathogenesis, brain correlation, Apasmāra). The review excluded non-peer-reviewed blogs and unverifiable sources. Where possible, slokas (Sanskrit verses) from the classics were quoted. Critical discussion followed to link classical perspectives and modern neuroscience.

Discussion

Definition and classical understanding of Manovāha Srotas

According to one authoritative source, Manovāha Srotas is defined as:

“तद्वदतीन्द्रियाणां पुनः सत्त्वादीनां केवलां चेतनावच्छरीरमयन् अभूतमधिष्ठानभूतां च। तदेतत् स्रोतसाम् प्रकृतिभूतत्वान् न विकारैरुपसृज्यते शरीरम्। ... अन्यम् उपसृज्यते चेतासम्।”

It is described as the channel through which “mind” (manas) flows:

“यतो मनो विचरित तत् मनोवहानि ध मनयः हृदयात् उत्पद्यन्ते” (approximate translation)

In the Charaka Samhitā (Chikitsā 9/5), manovāha srotas is mentioned as the seat of mental processes: the mind and intellect are carried via these channels and when doshas afflict them, disorders of manas follow.

Importantly, while the enumeration of standard srotas (in Vimana 5/8) does *not* list Manovāha among the canonical thirteen, the term appears elsewhere in Sharira and Chikitsā sections, marking its specialized status.

Site and anatomical-functional correlation

originating from it. However, some modern

Ayurvedic scholars propose that “hrdaya” in this context may metaphorically refer to the brain, given the functions of the mind (manas, buddhi, smriti) align more with the brain than the anatomical heart.

From a neurophysiological perspective, the concept of a channel carrying mind could be correlated with



neuronal networks, neurotransmission pathways, and the connectivity of brain regions responsible for cognition, memory and consciousness. The classical notion of dosha-doshaja affliction of these channels may be viewed as functional or structural disruption of brain circuits. For instance, obstruction (sanga) or hyperspeed (ati-pravritti) of srotas might analogously reflect impaired neuronal conduction or deregulated excitability.

Hence, while direct anatomical mapping is not possible, Manovāha Srotas can be understood in modern terms as the neuro-physiological substrates underlying mind processes.

Manovāha Srotas s Apasmāra (Epilepsy)

In the Charaka Samhitā, Apasmāra is defined:

“स्मृतेरपगमां प्राहुरपस्मारां िभषन्निदः । तमः प्रवेशां बीभत्सचेष्ांां ध ीसत्त्वसम्प्लवात्॥” (Ch Chi 10/3) The etiopathogenesis indicates that:

“िवभ्रान्तबहुदोषाणामिहताशुचिभोजनात् रजस्तमोभ्ाां िवहते सत्त्वे दोषावृते हृदि” (Ch Chi 10/4) Here the vitiated doshas lodge in the day and disturb sattva, leading to Apasmāra.

Since Manovāha Srotas carry manas viharaya/dhamañs, this translates into diseased mind-channels. The text further states that emotional stresses (chintā, kāma, bhaya, krodha) play a role. Modern reviews observe that long-term stress, mental trauma, and neural dysregulation contribute to epilepsy, aligning with this view.

Classification of Apasmāra is given as Vātaja, Pittaja, Kaphaja, and Sannipātaja. In terms of srotas pathology: Manovāha Srotas is said to be obstructed (sanga, vimargagamana) or hyperactive (ati-pravritti) by doshas, leading to the disturbed mind-state and convulsive phenomena.

Thus, the concept of Manovāha Srotas offers an Ayurvedic framework for brain–mind disorders including epilepsy.

Mana in Sanskrit means to think, believe, imagine C suppose.

चिन्तां विचययमूहं च ध्येयां सांकल्पमेवापिकां चिन्मनसो ज्ञेयां तत्सर्वहं यसांशकम्

Mano-Visaya (objects of mind): The things which can be perceived by means of mana are called the object of mind. they are follow

1. **cintyam;** It is that in which it is considered whether an act is to be done or not.
2. **Vicharyam;** It is that in which it is considered whether it is reasonable or not.
3. **Uhyam;** Hypothesis (a proposition made as a basis for reasoning, without any assumption of truth) of which is imagined.
4. **Dheyam;** It is the object for which one has attachment or attention.
5. **Sankalpyam;** It means determination. It is that in which it is considered whether it is good or bad.

According to Charaka Samhita that, physical disease contaminates the mind over time and mental disease contaminates the body over time, Mind like body, It is also said to be the basis of disease. Mental disorders occur due to

dietary, behavioral, visitor, and mental reasons. The brain is responsible for cognition which functions through numerous processes and executive functions. Executive functions include ability to filter information and tune out irrelevant stimuli with attention control and cognitive inhibition, the ability to process and manipulate information held working memory, the ability to think about multiple concepts

simultaneously and switch tasks with cognitive flexibility and ability to determine the relevance of information or appropriateness of an action.

इन्द्रियाभिग्रहः कमयमनसः स्वस्य निग्रहः । ऊहो विचारश्च ततः परां बुद्धिः प्रवतयते.

MANO-KARMA (ACTION OF MIND): The mind are following are the action of the mind.



1. **Indriyabhigrahaḥ:** Control over sense organ
2. **Svasya Nigrahaḥ:** Self-restraint
3. **Uha:** Guessing
4. **Vicara:** Consideration

Control of sense organs, self-restraint, hypothesis and consideration represent the action of the mind. Beyond that flourishes the domain and intellect. Heart does not have any cognitive, intellectual or psychological function. If we observe base of skull then 10 openings are seen from which 12 cranial nerves and spinal cord exit. If we consider brain as hriday then these 10 exits of skull with cranial nerves can be correlated with Dasha Dhamani. Heart does not have any cognitive, intellectual or psychological function. So for manovaha srotas we can say that the word hriday means brain not heart.

Acharya Charaka tells the process of dreams in Charak Samhita Indriyasthana (3) When the Manovaha Srotas (the channels of movement of mind) are filled with excessively vitiated Tridoṣās, the person experiences nightmares during difficult

period, When a person is not in deep sleep, with the help of the lord of all senses, i.e. with the help of the mind, a person experiences various kind of dreams and some of which become fruitful and some are not.

Conclusion

The concept of Manovāha Srotas offers a profound classical lens through which mind–brain disorders can be viewed, particularly Apasmāra (epilepsy). While not directly translatable into modern neuroanatomy, the functional analogy of channels carrying mind via the hr̥daya/dhamanī resonates with neural pathways of cognition, memory and excitability. The involvement of doshic imbalance, emotional triggers, and channel obstruction in Apasmāra fits well with a holistic view of epilepsy. For contemporary practice, this indicates the value of integrating Ayurvedic channel-theory, lifestyle-dietary modifications, rasāyana and mind-stabilising approaches with modern neurological management. However, further research (clinical, translational) is needed to solidify these linkages and outcomes. By bridging classical Ayurveda and modern neuroscience, Manovāha Srotas can become a fruitful paradigm for integrative neuro-psychiatric care.

Charakacharya must have seen 10 exits at base of skull and cranial nerves are coming out of it. Hence it has been described as Dasha Dhamani. Since brain is inside skull and its centre point of nervous system it is mentioned as Uradva Hriday.

Manas is the main platform through which man is exposed to pain, emotions, trauma and stress. A person having equilibrium between three biological humors, metabolic fire, tissues, waste-products, the soul, sensory organs and the mind is known as healthy.

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