

International Research Journal of Ayurveda & Yoga


Vol. 5 (3),56-62, March, 2022

ISSN: 2581-785X;<https://irjay.com/>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47223/IRJAY.2022.5307>



A Critical Review of *Dhamani Sharir* in the Modern Perspective

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Article Info

Article history:

Received on: 12-02-2022

Accepted on: 19-03-2022

Available online: 31-03-2022

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ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda is a treasure trove of information developed and discovered by our forefathers. To fully comprehend and apply the concept of *dhamani sharir*, we must first understand *Sharira*. For students of any system of medicine, understanding of *Rachana Sharira* (anatomy) is required. *Srotas*, *Siras*, and *Dhamani* are terms from the Vedas. The terms *Siras* and *Dhamani* is referred to blood vessels in general. However, according to commentators, *Dhamani* is a thick blood vessel connecting to the heart, and *sira* is a thin blood vessel. According to *Sushruta*, ten *Dhamani* spread upward, ten downward, and four sideward emerging from the *nabhi*. According to *Charak*, *hridaya* produces ten *Dhamani*. *Dhamanis* (arteries) described in *Ayurveda* represent a tubular channel taking origin from the *Hridaya* (heart) and possess the characteristics of pulsation and circulation of *Rasa* (lymph chyle or plasma) and *Rakta* (blood) throughout the body. The up-coursing *Dhamani* prefers to maintain the body's integrity by performing particular body functions such as sound, touch, taste, smell, sneezing, laughter, speech, and so on. The *Dhamanis* that come down establish a pathway for *Vata*, urine, excrement, semen, and contained food to flow downward. The *Tiryaggami-Dhamani* can be taken as the cutaneous or peripheral vessels supplying the superficial and deep layers of the skin. This essay will assist in learning more about *Dhamanis* through ancient science.

Keywords: Arteries *Dhamani*, *Hridaya*, *nabhi*, *Sira*, *Tiryaggami-Dhamani*,

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a treasure trove of information developed and discovered by our forefathers. To fully comprehend and apply the concept of *dhamani sharir*, we must first understand *Sharira*. For students of any system of

medicine, understanding of *Rachana Sharira* (anatomy) is required. Acharya *Sushruta* has been referred to as the 'Father of Surgery.' He has placed a higher value on practical knowledge. *Srotas*, *Siras*, and *Dhamani* are terms from the Vedas. They've all been used in the same way, but



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they're all different. The terms *Siras* and *Dhamanis* can be traced back to the Vedas. They've both been used in the same context. These terms, however, are not interchangeable. The terms *Siras* and *Dhamani* is referred to blood vessels in general. However, according to commentators, *Dhamani* is a thick blood vessel connecting to the heart, and *sira* is a thin blood vessel. Both *Sira* and *Dhamani* are associated with the heart, yet their relationships are distinct. Many instances in the Sushrut Samhita use the word *Dhamani*, such as Moola of *Srotas*, *Nabhinadi*, and so on. The up-coursing *Dhamani* prefers to maintain the body's integrity by performing particular body functions such as sound, touch, taste, smell, sneezing, laughter, speech, and so on. The *Dhamanis* that come down establish a pathway for *Vata*, urine, excrement, semen, and contained food to flow downward. *Rasa* is carried by *Dhamanis* all over their bodies and filled with air; it is significant that *Rasa* is only conveyed by *Dhamanis*.

Dhamani in Ancient Ayurvedic Texts

Dhamani's etymological meaning is derived from the Sanskrit verb '*DhamyateIti*', which means 'to expand'. '*DhamanaatDhamanyaha*'¹ says *Charaka*, 'the one who has the distinguishing traits of pulsation is *Dhamani*'. '*DhmanatPooranaatBaahyenaRasaadenetyartaha*'² according to *Chakrapani's* commentary. '*Dhamani* is the hollowed-out one that is filled with *Rasadi*'. It's important to understand the differences between the terms *Dhamana* and *Poorana*. As per the commentary of *Chakrapani* *Dhamani* does *Poorana* (fills) *Karma*, *Srotas* (capillaries) does the *Poshana Karma* and *Sira* (vein) does *Deshantara Gamana*³*karma* (taking away from the site). According to *Vagbhata*, *Sira*, *Dhamani*, and *Srotas* are structures having lumen (*Sharirachidra*)⁴. In *Naadi Pariksha Vidhi* (pulse examination), *Sharangadhara* used the term *Dhamani*, and the exact location was given, namely near the root of *Kara Angushta* (root of thumb). The *Jeevasaakshi* is the pulsatile function of these *Naadis*⁵.

Origin of Dhamani

Both *Dhamani* and *sira* are said to have originated in *nabhi*, according to *Sushruta*. The word *nabhi* has been employed in connection to foetal life in *ayurvedic samhitas* as *charak Samhita*, *ashtanga sangraha*, *ashtanga hridaya* etc. In the *sutrasthan's* *shonitavarniyaadhyaya*, '*Sushruta* had changed his mind on the genesis of *Dhamanis* from *nabhi* to *hridaya*. *Charaka* has also mentioned in 30th chapter of *sutrasthan* that the *Dhamani* arise from the *hridaya*.

According to *Sushruta*, ten *Dhamani* spread upward, ten

downward, and four sideward among the *Dhamani* emerging from the *nabhi* (transverse). According to *Charak*, *hridaya* produces ten *Dhamani*. According to *ashtangasangraha sharira* 6/9, there are twenty-four *Dhamani*; they provide nourishment to the entire body, similar to canals carrying water supplying nourishment to a vast plot of land; the *nabhi* is surrounded by them (*Dhamani*), just as an axle hole is surrounded by spokes (of a wheel); life is designed to dwell at that umbilicus (centre); thus, it is the seat of internal fire. *Bhavprakash* further stated that *Dhamanis* are twenty-four in number and are descended from *nabhi* (24). 10 spread upwards, ten below, and four in various directions from among them. These capillaries feature tiny openings through which *Rasa* (nutrients) flow, very similar to the pores found in the blossom stalk of a lotus flower.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

To approach the objectives scientifically, data from *Ayurveda samhitas* and modern books, national and international journals, magazines, conferences, online resources, prior work done, presented papers, etc. will be critically analyzed and relevant information will be sought. Author tried to figure out what term was used in ancient literature and to grasp it. This essay will assist in learning more about *Dhamanis* through ancient science.

DISCUSSION

Blood vessels are referred to as *Siras* and *Dhamanis* in general. However, according to acharyas, *Dhamani* is a thick blood vessel connecting to the heart, and *sira* is a thin blood vessel. In *sutrasthan's* *sonitavarniyaadhyaya*, *Sushruta* himself has changed his mind about the genesis of *Dhamanis* from *nabhi* to *hridaya*. According to *Sushruta*, ten *Dhamani* spread upward, ten downward, and four sideward among the *Dhamani* emerging from the *nabhi* (transverse). The *Dhamanis* come from the *hridaya*, according to *Charaka* in the 30th chapter of the *Sutrasthan*. According to *Charak*, *hridaya* produces ten *Dhamani*. According to *astangasangraha sharira* 6/9, there are twenty-four *Dhamani*; they provide nourishment to the entire body, similar to canals carrying water supplying nourishment to a vast plot of land; the *nabhi* is surrounded by them (*Dhamani*), just as an axle hole is surrounded by spokes (of a wheel); life is designed to dwell at that umbilicus (centre); thus, it is the seat of internal fire. *Bhavprakash* further stated that *Dhamanis* are twenty-four in number and are descended from *nabhi* (24). 10 spread

upwards, ten below, and four in various directions from among them. These capillaries feature tiny openings through which *Rasa* (nutrients) flow, very similar to the pores found in the blossom stalk of a lotus flower. Table 1 Shows Classification of *Dhamani* by *Acharyas*

'*Dhamani*', used for the arteries, are thick walled, elastic vessels, pulsation of which can be felt at various places in the body and the physician have always used its pulsating action, particularly at the root of the thumb of the hand, as a sign of life and to determine and happy and painful states of the body, diagnosis of various diseases and the death of a person⁶.

According to *Ayurveda*, the specific characteristics attributed to *Dhamani* (artery) can be put forth and described under four broad headings:

1) *Dhamani* is a hollow tube-like porous channel:

Characterizing and specifying the structure of the *Dhamanis*, *Maharshi Sushruta* has said that as the lotus stem and its constituting components have natural pores (channels), similarly, the *Dhamanis* also have the pores through which *Rasa* (or chyle), *Rakta* (or blood) is carried out (and distributed in the body)⁷. This above statement clearly speaks that the *Dhamanis* are porous structure like short and big lotus stem through which *Rasa* is carried out all over the body. In ancient treatise like *Vedas*, *Upanishadas*, *Smiritis* and *Mahabharata*, the term *Dhamani* used in the texts conveys the meaning of artery. The etymological genesis of '*Dhamani*' has been rightly given in *Upodghata* of *Rasayogasangraha* by *Pt. Hariprapanna Shastriji*. It is said that 'Which pulsate or performs throbbing movement, fulfils the requirement and nourish the body, is recognized as *Dhamani*. Hence, *Dhamanis* because of performing only throbbing flow function of *Rasa* (lymph chyle or plasma) of the body have been called to be a purified (oxygenated) blood carrying channel.

2) *Dhamanis* are attached to the *Hridaya* (heart):

Though, '*Dhamanis*' have been said to be '*Nabhiprabhava*' (S.S.9/2) even then generally they are always stated to be attached with the *Hridaya* (heart)^{8,9,10}. It is evident that both, the *Hridaya* (heart) and *Nabhi* (umbilicus) are quite separate and single organ situated in different regions of the body. The umbilicus is situated in the centre of the abdominal wall, through which the umbilical cord, consisting of both the *Dhamanis* (arteries) and '*Siras*'(veins) keeps connected the fetus with the uterine wall of the mother and maintains the nutritional supply of the former, till its full-term growth and delivery. Because

of this above-mentioned fact of nutritional supply during intra-uterine life of the foetus both the *Dhamanis* and '*Siras*' have been stated to be *Nabhiprabhava* (related or having origin with the umbilicus or naval).

3) *Dhamanis* carry *Rasa* and *Rakta* both:

Charak has rightly stated that the root of the *Rasavaha-Srotas* (channels for carrying the lymph chyle or plasma) is the *Hridaya* (heart) and the *Rasa* is carried out throughout the body by ten *Dhamanis* *Sushruta* has also clearly expressed the relationship in between the *Hridaya* (heart), *Dhamanis* (arteries) and the *Rakta* (blood) along with their functional aspects of saturation of body tissues, nutritional supply, maintenances of growth and development, formation of milk in the breast, certain breast diseases found in younger and adult age of women and their periodical menstrual flow¹¹.

4) *Dhamanis* pulsate: Characterizing the '*Dhamanis*', *Srotasas* and *Siras*

Maharshi Charaka has distinctly differentiated that out of these three body channels, it is only the first one which constantly pulsate, till life is there¹². The applied aspects of '*Dhamanis*' are of general importance in everyday today practice. Enlightening the clinical significance of '*Dhamanis*' *Sharangadhara* has nicely stated that whether a person is living or dead and healthy or diseased, are decided by examining the pulse on the root of the thumb and it is always found to be rapid and warm during provocation of fever¹³. In short it can be said that the *Dhamanis* (arteries) described in *Ayurveda* represent a tubular channel taking origin from the *Hridaya* (heart) and possess the characteristics of pulsation and circulation of *Rasa* (lymph chyle or plasma) and *Rakta* (blood) throughout the body.

Divisions of Dhamanis (arteries) and their functions:

Maharsi Sushruta has nicely stated that the *Rasa* (lymph chyle or plasma) situated in the *Hridaya* is carried out by twenty-four *Dhamani*, out of which ten go up and ten downwards and four obliquely and thus governed by destiny it keeps growing, maintains and nourishes the entire body constantly day and night¹⁴. In *Sharirsthana*, the described functions of these twenty-four *Dhamani* taking origin from *Nabhi*' (umbilical region)¹⁵, though appears to be very much hypothetical, but when thought upon and critically analyzed on scientific basis, the approach stands substantial and meaningful. Details of the upwards, downwards and oblique *Dhamani* and their functions are being given below:

A) Urdhvagāmi (upwards) going Dhamanis (arteries) and their functions:

The *Dhamani* going upwards carry specifically the impulses of *Shabda* (sound), *Sparsha* (touch), *Rupa* (vision), *Rasa* (taste), *Gandha* (smell), *Prashvas* (inspiration), *Uchvasa* (expiration), *Jrimbha* (Yawning), *Kshut* (Sneezing), *Hasita* (laughing), *Kathita* (speech) and *Rudita* (weeping), etc., and thus maintain the body. These ten *Dhamani* after reaching the *Hridaya* (heart) get divided into three and thus become thirty in total. Out of them, each *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, *Rakta* and *Rasa* are carried by two *Dhamani*, thus becoming ten in total; those which are meant to carry *Shabda* (sound), *Rupa* (vision), *Rasa* (taste), and *Gandha* (smell) are eight in number (i.e., two for each); two are meant for speech, two for rhythmic phonation, two for sleep, two for keeping awake, two for flow of tears and two for flow of milk (externally) from the breasts in females and the corresponding two carry the semen (internally) from the breasts in the males. Thus, all these thirty described *Dhamanis* perform their functions accordingly. They nourish and maintain the parts above the *Nabhi* (umbilicus) i.e., abdomen, lateral sides of the trunk, back, chest, shoulders, neck and superior extremities¹⁶. some of the modern synonymous terms which are possible for certain *Dhamani* as well as their simultaneous recognition like corresponding nerves as advocated by *Pt. Gangadhar Shastri ji* are being given below. They are:

1. *Sabdavaha-Dhamani*-Internal auditory artery (Acoustic nerve),
2. *RupavahaDhamani*-Central retinal artery (optic nerve),
3. *Rasavaha-Dhamani*-Lingual artery (nerves of tastes which are branches from glossopharyngeal and lingual);
4. *Gandhavaha-Dhamani*- Sphenopalatine branch of the internal maxillary artery (olfactory nerve);
5. *Ghosakara-Dhamani*-Laryngeal arteries (Inferior laryngeal nerve);
6. *Bhasana-Dhamani*-Sublingual artery (Hypoglossal nerve);
7. *Ashruvahi-Dhamani*-Lacrimal artery (lacrimal nerve);
8. *Stanyavaha-Dhamani*-Mammary artery (No secretory nerves of the mammary gland have yet been described.

[B] Adhogami (downward) going Dhamani (arteries) and their functions:

The *Dhamani* going downwards, perform the functions of carrying the *Vata* (gaseous components), *Mutra* (urine),

Purisha (faeces), *Shukra* (seminal fluid) and *Artava* (menstrual blood) etc. in lower part of the body. Reaching the *Pittashaya* (region of the gallbladder) they take up and carry the well digested *AnnapanaRasa* (chyme) and nourish the body; they supply the *Rasa* to upwards and oblique going *Dhamani*, fill up the reservoirs of *Rasa*, separate the *Mutra* (urine), *Purisha* (faeces) and *Sveda* (sweat) from the *Anna-Rasa* and get divided into three parts between the *Amashaya* (stomach) and *Pakvashaya* (small intestine) and thus, they result into thirty *Dhamani*. out of these the *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* (mucoïd components), *Rakta* (blood components) and *Rasa*, each are carried out by two *Dhamani* and result total in ten (numbers); two situated in intestines carry the *Anna* (solid food matter); two the *Jala* (fluid components); there are two *Mutravaha-Dhamani* going towards the *Mutravasti* (urinary bladder), two *Shukravaha-Dhamani* are there for *Shukrotpati* (formation of seminal fluid) and two are for its ejaculation. These (seminal fluid carrying *Dhamani*) function as the *ArtavavahaDhamani*, in female; related to *Sthulantra* (large intestines) there are two *Dhamani* for removal of faecal matter and remaining eight *Dhamani* supply (blood) to the oblique running *Dhamani* for the formation of *Sveda* (sweat). In this way, these described thirty *Dhamani* with their branches maintain and nourish the *Pakvashaya* (small intestine), *Kati* (waist), *Mutra* (urine), *Purisha* (faeces), *Guda* (rectum) *Vasti* (urinary bladder), *Medhra* (penis) and *Sakthis* (lower extremities)¹⁷.

We know that the '*Vatamutradi*' get generated in the abdominal area and their natural moving directions are downwards. After receiving the necessary requirements through the *Dhamani*, these substances get produced in their respective organs and accordingly move downwards. Probably, based on this very fact, the text has stated that they are carried down by the *Dhamani*. The words '*Pittashayamabhiprapanna*' used in the text, is suggestive of the edible things after reaching the *Amashaya* (stomach) and *Ksudrantra* (small intestines), said to be the seat of *Pittadharakala*, get digested and absorbed in the form of *AnnaRasa* (chyle) which nourishes the whole body. The stomach and intestines are capable to accomplish the process of digestion and absorption only when the supply of blood in properly maintained over there. This is the reason that in the text, the *Dhamani* have been stated to be the discriminator and carrier of the *AnnapanaRasa* (chyle). The mention of '*ArpayantiUrdhvaganamtiryaganam*' in the text meant that the upwards and oblique going *Dhamani* are nourished by it. We know that the formation

of *Rasa* (chyle) is furnished after digestion of eatables by the help of *AdhogamiDhamani* and the same reaching to the *Hridaya* (heart) through the *Siras* (veins) and *Rasayanis* (lymphatics) nourish the *Urdhvagami*(upwards) and *Tiryaggami* (oblique) going *Dhamani*. This suggests that the nourishing of the upwards going *Dhamanis*, are indirectly accomplished by the downwards going *Dhamanis*.

Artavavaha- Dhamanis in ladies should also be taken as uterine and ovarian arteries (hypogastric and ovarian plexus) as the process of genesis of *Artava*(menstrual cycle) commences in the *Bijakoshas* (ovaries) and *Garbhashaya* (uterus). With the term, *VarconiRasanyausthulantrapratibaddha*, the *Dhamani* like inferior mesenteric arteries, middle colic and right colic arteries (pelvic visceral plexus) should be taken as they facilitate the function of *Sthulantra* in carrying down and evacuating the fecal matter outside, hence they have been designated as '*VarchoniRasani*' The remaining eight *Dhamani* are supposed to provide (nourishment to the) sweat (glands) through their oblique running routs. Thus, these thirty *Dhamani* with their branches and sub-branches maintain and provide the nourishment to the colon, rectum, urinary bladder, penis and inferior extremities, situated below the umbilical region. These above said *Adhogami-Dhamani*, in the light of modern anatomical descriptions are found to be mainly concerned with abdominal aorta and its branches.

[C] *Tiryaggami (oblique going) Dhamanis (arteries) and their functions:*

Each of the four oblique going *Dhamani* divide and re-divide into hundreds and thousands of branches, when they proceed further. Thus, (divided into branches and sub-branches) they become countless in number and make the entire body bounded and pervaded with a network of window. The (terminal) openings of these *Dhamani* are connected with the hair pits(follicles) through which they carry the sweat and nourish them (by supplying) internally and externally with *Anna-Rasa*. The essences of *Abhyangas* (oily ointments), *Pariseka* (irrigation or spray of oils), *Avagahana* (immersion bath) and *Alepana* (pastes of drugs) applied to the skin are absorbed by these *Dhamani*. Through these, the experiences of pleasant and painful touches are perceived (by *Jivatma*). Thus, the four *Dhamani* and their branches spread all over the body have been described with their functions¹⁹. Based on modern anatomical description, the *Tiryaggami-Dhamani* can be taken as the cutaneous or peripheral vessels supplying the

superficial and deep layers of the skin. The term *Romakupa* is suggestive of *Sveda-granthi*(Sweat glands) and *Ayurveda* has always established their close inter relationship²⁰. *Romakupa* (hair pits) and *Sveda-granthis* (sweat glands) have their independent status and places devoid of *Romakupai.e.*, palmar and planter aspects of the hand and feet, respectively, are found to have plenty of sweat glands.

The term '*Tvacivipakvani*' in the text is suggestive of the metabolism by its heat for the substances applied over and absorbed in the system. Many *Abhyangas* (massages) of different medicated oils, the *Pariseka* (spray) of various indicated decoctions, the *Avagaha* (bath) with medicated water and for *Alepa* and *Pralepa* (ointments, paints and pigments) of different medicated juices and pastes are used. The absorption of these medicines, through *Romakupas* (pores) has been also approved by the modern medicine. It has been decided by certain researchers on their own experience that when patients are incapable of taking meal through their mouth, then their nutritional supply could be maintained for some period by application and absorption of particular cereal pastes on the surface of his skin²¹.

The term '*Sparsamsukhamasukhamva*' though is indicative of pleasant and painful experiences (perceived by *Jivatma*) through *Dhamani* but as per modern physiological approaches, the *Nadis* (nerves) are mainly held responsible for such experiences of touch etc. even then the close relationship of blood in this respect cannot be denied. This is well known that 'the loss of blood supply' produced experimentally by compressing an artery digitally or with a pneumatic cuff, and in diseases by embolism, thrombosis, arterial spasm etc. also causes an orderly succession of sensory disturbances resembling those of mechanical compression (of the nerve trunk). The term '*Sparsa* (touch) incorporates *Guda-gudi* (feeling of manually provoked laughing sensation), *Kandu* (itching), *Jhunajhuni* (tingling), *Sunnata* (insensibility or numbness) and *Jalana* (burning) like various sensations of the body.

CONCLUSION

The *Urdhvagami-Dhamani* have concerned with internal functions of the head, neck, thorax and upper extremities, the *Adhogami-Dhamani* remain connected with the abdominal organs and lower extremities and the *Tiryaggami-Dhamani* have relationship with the outer surface or skin of the body. Based on modern anatomical description, the *Tiryaggami-Dhamani* can be taken as the

cutaneous or peripheral vessels supplying the superficial and deep layers of the skin. The pulsing of the *Dhamani* symbolizes the presence of life, as well as health and illness.

The micro-anatomical relationships between the cells and the blood arteries are of special importance in a tissue whose activity is so dependent on its blood supply. These *Dhamani* allow elements applied to the body's surface in the form of liquids or pastes to enter the body's interior. *Dhamani* perceives both pleasant and unpleasant touches. The *Dhamani* are *panchabhoutika*, which aid in the establishment of touch between the sense organs and their associated objects throughout life. Equating *Dhamani* with nerve is impossible since its characteristics are diametrically opposed to those of those arteries. The activities of *Dhamanis* (arteries) and nerves appear to be similar since they are interconnected and complementary to one another. Nerve functions in any portion of the body that is not supplied with blood by arteries will be ineffective.

Acknowledgements:

Financial Assistant: - Nil

Conflict of interest: - Nil

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How to cite this article : Singhal T, Srivastava N, Srivastava R, Kumar A "A Critical Review Of *Dhamani Sharir* In The Modern Perspective" IRJAY.[online]2022;5(3);56-62. Available from: <https://irjay.com> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47223/IRJAY.2022.5307>

Table 1 Classification of *Dhamani* by *Acharyas*

<i>Acharya</i>	No. of <i>Dhamani</i>
<i>Sushruta</i>	24
<i>Urdhvagami</i>	10
<i>Adhogami</i>	10
<i>Tiryakgami</i>	4
<i>Charaka</i>	10
<i>Bhavprakasha</i>	24
<i>AshtangaHridaya</i>	24
<i>Kashyapa</i>	200