



OJAS: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient medical sciences which aimed to protect the health by giving the knowledge of preventive health principles and cure the diseases by explaining the different types of treatment-procedures and principles. The concept of 'Ojas' is an independent principle of *Ayurveda*, which supports life, and protects life against various diseases. Essence of all seven *dhatu*s is called as *Ojas*, on which strength of the body depends. *Ojas* provides immunity to the body, hence body can be sustained against various infections. As long as *Ojas* is in physiological status, human body remains in homeostatic condition. Exactly which physical body component is indicated by 'Ojas' is not well understood in modern medicinal or anatomical or physiological language. *Ojas* is considered as a necessary factor for survival of human. The present article is an attempt to explore the concept of *Ojas* with its physiological and clinical significance.

Key Words: *Para ojas, Apra ojas, Homeostasis, Vyadhikshamatwa, Immunity.*

INTRODUCTION: *Ayurveda* science assumes an entity, which has strength to keep body, sense organs, mind and soul together in functional harmony. Word *Nibandhan* also indicates guard against adverse conditions in body. Adverse condition, which disturb homeostasis of living body, have to be guarded. This guarding entity is titled as 'Ojas'.¹ The definition of Health, according to W.H.O. "A state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".² In *Ayurveda Acharya Susruta* said that "Dosha, Agni, Dhatu, Mala and their activities are normal, soul, sense organs and mind are calm is called "Svastha" (Healthy Person).³ The concept of *Ojas* is an independent principal of *Ayurveda*, which supports life, and protects life against various diseases. *Ojas* is a "vigour".⁴ After proper digestion the partially digested food which is *ahara rasa*, is important as it nourishes all the

*dhatu*s at their respective level.⁵ All together its output is the essence of all *dhatu*s called as - *ojas*.⁶ The *ojas* is principally responsible for the immunity inside body. The *ojas* and resistance power of immunity is proven by the cause effect relationship.⁷ According to *Sushruta*, *Ojas* is the fine essence of all the *Dhatu*s and the superfine essence of *Shukra dhatu* which are responsible for biological strength, vitality and immunity in the body which make a person physically active.⁸

FORMATION OF OJAS

According to *Charak*, first *Ojas* is formed in the body i.e., in the intrauterine life.⁹ *Shukra* and *Artava* unite to form *garbha*. Due to union of *Shukra* and *Artava*, fluid called *garbharasa* gets formed. This *garbharasa* is a nourishing fluid, which nourishes growing embryo. *Ojas* exists in this *garbharasa*. After heart is being formed in the foetus, the *Ojas* which is nourishing the *garbha*, enters heart and then cardiac activity of foetus begins.

Desruction of this *Ojas* results in death. *Ojas* formed in *garbha* is important for life. *Ojas*, which nourishes the *garbha* in the early stage of embryonic period and which enters heart of *garbha* is a *Para* type of *Ojas*.¹⁰ Again *Charak* has mentioned that: As bees collect honey from the fruits and flowers, that way essence of all *Dhatus* collect to form *Ojas*. This description of *Ojas* formation is applicable *Apara Ojas*.¹¹

LOCATION AND TYPES OF OJAS

According to *Acharya Chakrapani* two type of *Ojas* present in the body. They are follows-

1. *Para Ojas*

Acharya Charak mentioned that *Hridaya* is dwelling place of *Para ojas*. It is principle type *ojas*.¹² This is originated in intra-uterine life of an individual. It is not affected by easily by simple deviations from physiology. It is eight drops in

measure. It is called '*Pradhana*' because it's primary and principle function is to sustain.¹³ Any loss or deficiency leads to wasting, decay and degeneration to body and excessive loss cause instantaneous death. It indicates that *Ojas* keeps the human being alive.¹⁴

2. *Apara Ojas*

Apara Ojas is also known as *Shleshmika Ojas* because its properties are similar to *Shleshma*. It is present whole the body.¹⁵ This is generated by excellence of seven *Dhatu*. As all body entities are nourished by food, this *Apara ojas* is also nourished by food. Diseases and other etiological factors affect this type of '*Ojas*'.¹⁶ Any diminution in volume of *Apara ojas* may lead the absence of strength of the body and causes of various diseases.¹⁷

QUALITIES OF OJAS¹⁸

Table.1Qualities of *oja* mentioned in *brihatrayi*

Sr.no.	<i>Charak</i>	<i>Sushruta</i>	<i>Ashtang Hridaya</i>
1.	<i>Guru</i> (Heavy)	<i>Somatmaka</i> (Water in nature)	<i>Snigdha</i> (Unctuousness)
2.	<i>Shita</i> (Cold)	<i>Snigdha</i> (Unctuousness)	<i>Somatmaka</i> (Water in nature)
3.	<i>Mrudu</i> (Softness)	<i>Shukla</i> (Whitish)	<i>Ishat lohita pitakam</i> (Faint reddish yellow)
4.	<i>Shlakshan</i> (Smoothness)	<i>Shita</i> (Cold)	
5.	<i>Bahal</i> (Density)	<i>Sthira</i> (Stable)	
6.	<i>Madhur</i> (Sweety)	<i>Sar</i> (Liquid or Movable in nature)	
7.	<i>Sthira</i> (Stable)	<i>Mrudu</i> (Softness)	
8.	<i>Prasanna</i> (Clearness)	<i>Vivikta</i> (Clear or Transparent)	
9.	<i>Pichhila</i> (Sliminess)	<i>Mrutsna</i> (Delicate)	
10.	<i>Snigdha</i> (Unctuousness)	<i>Pranaytana uttamam</i> (Best supporter of life or excellent of life force.)	

FUNCTIONS OF OJAS

- Most important function of ‘Ojas’ is to keep body alive. Also to sustain the living body.
- Another function is to functionally tune body, soul mind and all sense organs with each other.
- Another function is parallel with ‘Bala’ since it is called ‘Bala’ as well. This calls for ideal functions of ‘Bala’ to be included in function of ‘Ojas’. They are enlisted below.
- Etiological factors of diseases are *Dosah*. These remain in physiological limits in health. Individuals with waning *Ojas*, become so weak that physiological limit of *Dosah* also does not bring health to them.
- Due to ‘Bala’ quality of ‘ojas’, individual shows well-nourished fleshy body with durability. Commentator *Dalhana* states that *Mamsadhu* is mentioned as a representative of all seven *Dhatavah*. Remaining *Dhatavah* should be taken in similar manner.
- Due to ‘Bala’ quality of ‘Ojas’, all types of movements in living body are smooth and without any obstruction.
- Due to ‘Bala’ quality of ‘Ojas’, voice of a person and color of a person is pleasant.
- Due to ‘Bala’ quality of ‘ojas’, function of external sense organs with organs of functions are smooth.
- Function of ‘Ojas’ in intra-uterine life is as follow:
 - i. It helps in proper union of ovum and sperm by means of its excellence.
 - ii. It also helps in primary stages of fetal development like morula and blastula stage.
 - iii. It help in differentiation of various organs and systems.¹⁹

Abovementioned verse is explained by commentator *Chakrapani* as follow:

When sperm-ovum-soul unite, it is ‘*Garbha*’, and excellent part of this is ‘*sara*’. *Ojas* remains in this ‘*sara*’. As a result of sperm-ovum-soul union, development of further stages like morula, blastula take place. When heart is differentiated, then it is time for ‘*Ojas*’ to get located there. In this manner, in all three-principle events of intra-uterine life, ‘*Ojas*’ remains as chief participating entity, in union of sperm and ovum, in formation of blastula etc. and in differentiating further fetal development.²⁰ These all above mention functions are important feature of ‘*Oja*’.

CHARACTERISTICS FEATURES OF OJAS

1. Colour – white, or slightly yellowish red in colour.
2. Appearance - resembling with the colour Of ghee.
3. Taste – sweet just like honey.
4. Smell – like that of fried paddy (laja).²¹

DIFFERENT FACTORS WHICH CAUSES REDUCTION OF OJAS

In *Ayurveda* various causes which are responsible for reduction of *ojas* i.e.

- i. *Abhighata* (Injury)
- ii. *Ativyayama* (Excessive physical exercise)
- iii. *Kopa* (Anger)
- iv. *Shoka* (Grief)
- v. *Anashana* (Fasting for long period)
- vi. *Chinta* (Constant worry)
- vii. *Rukshaaahar* (Consumption of food which are dry in nature)
- viii. *Pramitashana* (Consuming very less quantity of food)
- ix. *Vata-atapa seven* (Excessive exposure to heavy blow of wind and sun heat)
- x. *Bhaya* (Grief and sorrow)
- xi. *Rukshapaan* (Drinking strong wines)

- xii. *Prajagar* (Keeping awake at nights)
- xiii. Excessive elimination of *Kapha*, *Shonita*, *Shukra* & *Mala*
- xiv. *Kala* (Due to old age)
- xv. *Ativyavaya* (Excessive sex)²²

DISORDERS OF OJAS

Ojas is considered as an essential factor for survival of human. As long as *ojas* is in physiological status, human body remains in homeostatic condition.

Any disturbance of any kind endangers life. Such status of '*Ojas*' is called '*Ojovikrti*'. A physician has to deal with three problems related to '*ojas*'. '*Ojas*' undergoes three abnormal conditions due to etiological factors. The conditions are as follows:

- A. *Visramsa of 'ojas'*
- B. *Vyapat of 'ojas'*
- C. *Ksaya of 'ojas'*

A) *Visramsa of Ojas* –

Meaning of '*ojas-visramsa*' is:- Displacement of '*ojas*' due to injury etc.

Symptoms are follows:

- *Sandhivishlesh* – Displacement of joints
- *Gatrasada* – Bodyache
- *Doshachyavanam* – Displacement of Dosa from their proper location.
- *Kriyasannirodha* – Suppressed physical and mental activity.

B) *Vyapat of 'Ojas'* –

Meaning of '*ojas-vyapat*' is:- Spread of abnormal *ojas* due to vitiated *Dosa*, *Dusya*.

Symptoms are follows:

- *Stabhagurugatrata* – Heaviness in the body & restricted body movements
- *Vatashopha* – Oedema due to vitiated *Vata*.
- *Varnabheda* – Discolouration or changes in complexion
- *Glani* – Fatigue of the senses

- *Tandra* – Loss of function of sensory organs

- *Nidra* – Sensation of drowsiness

C) *Ksaya of 'ojas'* –

Meaning of '*ojas-ksaya*' is:- Loss of '*ojas*' in its physiological measure.

Symptoms are follows:

❖ According to *Sushruta Samhita*

- *Murchha* – Loss of function of sense organs

- *Mansakshaya* – Decrease of muscles

- *Moha* – Stupor

- *Pralap* – Delirium

- *Mrityu* - Death

❖ According to *Charak Samhita*

- *Bibheti* – Scared

- *Durbalo abhikshanam* – Physical & Mental debility

- *Dhayayati* – Worries always without apparent reason

- *Vyathita-indriya* – Feels discomfort in the sense organs

- *Duschhaya* – Loses his luster

- *Durmana* – does not remain happy

- *Ruksha* – Dryness

- *Shama-kashya* – Broken voice²³

OJAVRIDDDHI

Increased state of *ojas* does not cause any diseases. *Ojas vridhhi* indicates that the increase of *Vyadhikshyamata shakti* i.e. such person can resist any disease. There will not be any degeneration and decay of the tissues. A person with an increased state of *Ojas* is happy with strong *dhatu* and capacity to do hard work.²⁴

PHYSIOLOGICAL AND CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF OJAS

- *Ojas* is a special concept described in *Ayurveda*, which is different than *dosha-dhatu-mala*.

- *Ojas* is the first constituent to get developed in *garbha*.

- Qualities and volume of *Para ojas* in heart never changes, but the qualities and volume of *ojas* depend on *dhatu* which are being nourished and synthesized from digested food.
- Almost every *dhatu* and *mala* can be correlated with the concept of modern medicine, for example, *Rasa dhatu* with plasma/body fluids, *Rakta dhatu* with blood, *Purisha* with faeces, etc.
- But *ojas* cannot be correlated with any parallel concept of modern medicine.
- Qualities, function and disorders of *ojas* are described independently, hence it is a vital but different body constituent of body.
- *Ojas* is pumped out of the heart along with blood, therefore any cardiac dysfunction or circulatory disorder obstructs circulation of *ojas* which may result in immediate death.
- Synthesis of *ojas* depends on balanced diet and balanced state of *agni*.
- Balanced state of mind (*Preenan* of *mana*) also depends on *ojas*, therefore person becomes coward and depressed in *oja-kshaya*.
- *Ojas* is avital body constituent which is required to maintain balanced state of body and mind.
- Balanced state of *ojas* maintains health of all five *jnanendriyas* and *karmendriyas* so at older age also a person is very active, healthy and enthusiastic.
- Balanced state of *ojas* maintains quality of life by keeping balance of *Dosha-Dhatu-Mala*.
- Proper sleep at proper time, regular food habits, regular exercise keep *ojas* circulating in the body and prevent degenerative changes of *dhatu*.
- *Rasayan chikitsa* is important for balanced state of *dhatu* and *ojas*.

- *Prameha*, *Pandu*, *Grahani* are some diseases in which *ojas* is vitiated. Hence with proper food, healthy lifestyle and regular exercises, one can protect *ojas* and stay away from these diseases.²⁵

VYADHIKSHAMATVA IN AYURVEDA

Conservation of health and to cure diseases is the principal of *Ayurveda*. If people belonging to same socio-economical background are exposed to same type of environment, or if such people are exposed to water or air pollution, then some of them will suffer from respiratory disorders, some of them will suffer from gastrointestinal disorders, when some people will not be affected at all and they will be able to maintain their health status. And *Ayurveda* emphasises on the people having good immunity and people who have poor immunity or people who lacks immunity. We must know the factors responsible for good immunity and those who lack immunity.²⁶The human body has the ability to resist almost all type of organism or toxins that tends to damage the tissues and organs, leading to causation of disease. This capacity is known as *Vyadhikshamatwa shakti*. All the constitutions are not equally capable of *vyadhikshamatwa* i.e. capacity to resist the disease. *Ojas* is the essence of all *dhatu* and is a *shleshmika dravya*. As long as *dhatu* are strong and healthy and one conducting their normal functions with their essence i.e. *ojas* being both qualitatively and quantitatively normal and effective, the body will be strong enough to resist and encounter the decay and degeneration caused by the natural processes or disease.²⁷

DISCUSSION

Essence of all seven *dhatu* is called *Ojas*. *Dhatu* should sustain living body and also

nourish *Dhatu* where as ‘*Ojas*’ sustains the body but does not nourish *Dhatu* hence is not called eighth *Dhatu*. It is assumed to be very pure it is not included in ‘*Mala*’ category. Its importance also lies in very fact that it cannot be included in all three categories, namely ‘*Dosa*’, ‘*Dhatu*’ and ‘*Mala*’, but is a specially considered entity. This is first body entity getting generated after *Prakrita Vata* and other *Prakrita Dosha*. Strength or Stamina depends on *Shleshma* as well as *Ojas*. Decrease of *Shleshma* or *Ojas* or both will reduce physical stamina.

CONCLUSION

Ojas is essence of seven *dhatu* present in heart and whole body which is responsible for *Vyadhikshamatwa shakti* in the body. Destroying of *Apar Ojas* leads to death. So people were aware and prevent of *ojas* by using balanced diet and durgs. People may prevent themselves from various diseases by improve their immunity. *Rasayan chikitsa* is important for balanced state of *dhatu* and *ojas*.

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