PHYSIOLOGICAL AND CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF 

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 dhatus 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, Apara 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’. 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”. 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). The concept of Ojas is an independent principal of Ayurveda, which supports life, and protects life against various diseases. Ojas is a “vigour”. After proper digestion the partially digested food which is ahara rasa, is important as it nourishes all the dhatus at their respective level. All together its output is the essence of all dhatus called as – ojas. The ojas is principally responsible for the immunity inside body. The ojas and resistance power of immunity is proven by the cause effect relationship. According to Sushruta, Ojas is the fine essence of all the Dhatus 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.

FORMATION OF OJAS

According to Charak, first Ojas is formed in the body i.e., in the intrauterine life. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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’. 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.no.</th>
<th>Charak</th>
<th>Sushruta</th>
<th>Ashtang Hridaya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Guru (Heavy)</td>
<td>Somatmaka (Water in nature)</td>
<td>Snigdha (Uncruousness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Shita (Cold)</td>
<td>Snigdha (Uncruousness)</td>
<td>Somatmaka (Water in nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mrudu (Softness)</td>
<td>Shukla (Whitish)</td>
<td>Ishit lohita pitakam (Faint reddish yellow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Shlakshan (Smoothness)</td>
<td>Shita (Cold)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bahal (Density)</td>
<td>Sthira (Stable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Madhur (Sweety)</td>
<td>Sar (Liquid or Movable in nature)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Sthira (Stable)</td>
<td>Mrudu (Softness)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Prasanna (Clearness)</td>
<td>Vivikta (Clear or Transparent)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Pichhila (Sliminess)</td>
<td>Mrutsna (Delicate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Snigdha (Uncruousness)</td>
<td>Pranaytana uttamam (Best supporter of life or excellent of life force)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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)
Prajagar (Keeping awake at nights)

Excessive elimination of Kapha, Shonita, Shukra & Mala

Kala (Due to old age)

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 condition 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
  - Mansakshhayya – 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 voice 23

OJAVRIDDHI

Increased state of ojas does not cause any diseases. Ojas vridhhi indicates that the increase of Vyadhikshyamatwa 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 dhatus 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 dhatus 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 dhatus with plasma/body fluids, Rakta dhatus 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 a vital 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.26

The 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 dhatus 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 dhatus 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 themself from various diseases by improve their immunity. Rasayan chikitsa is important for balanced state of dhatu and ojas.

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