

OJAS - A REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, Ojas is a essence of dhatus (tissue) and considered as Sara of all the seven dhatus. Understanding ojas is as good as understanding tridoshas. starting from Rasa to Shukra and responsible for the strength of the body. Ojas is responsible for consciousness, purity in thoughts, health, positivity in feelings in every situation, better immunity, longevity, intelligence and memory. All human beings are well nourished by Ojas and its decrease leads to the cessation of life. Ojas is described as ‘deha saara’ in Charak Samhita. Though Ojas is located in the Hridya (heart), It controls or regulates the whole working system of the body. In Veda Bala, Prana, Veerya, Kapha etc terms are considered as the synonyms of Ojas. In Ayurveda

Ojas is also known as Bala (strength) because it provides strength to the body in terms of physical, mental, immunological and resistance to the body. This review article attempts to understandable ojas in scientific way and it's over all effects on human body.

KEYWORDS: Oja, Sarva dhatu Saar, Bala, Para Oja, Aparaj Oja.

INTRODUCTION

In context of physical health and vitality, Ojas Means, VIGOR

1. In Ayurvedic literatures, Bala, Prakriti and Kapha theses types of words are used as a synonym of Ojas.
2. Charak has mentioned that the kapha in its prakrita avastha (normal state) then it promotes strength, immunity, resistance and stability in the form of Ojas.
3. According to Sushruta, Ojas is the essence of Shukra dhatu (reproductive tissue) which are responsible for biological strength, vitality and immunity in the body which make a person physically active.
4. Ojas gets formed first in the body of living beings.
5. This indicates that Ojas is established during the time of the fertilization of sperm and ovum. Ojas is present in the form of Garbha Sara. When all body parts of fetus formed, Ojas manifested by its symptoms. In other words we can say that this Ojas before pregnancy remains in sperm and ovum. In the 8th month of pregnancy, Sthira Guna of Ojas is not established completely. Therefore Ojas is unstable in 8th month because exchange of Ojas takes place through blood vessels from mother to fetal heart and from fetal to mother's heart. When Ojas is transmitted from Garbha (fetus) to mother, she looks happy and born fetus at this time will be prone to develop infectious disorders. Due to which delivery in this month is to be considered dangerous.
6. Ojas gets nourishment after digestion of food.
7. Ojas gets nourishment after digestion of food.
8. So we can say that maintenance of Ojas is depend food nourishment and its proper digestion.

Controversies about Ojas

In Some granthas of Ayurveda Ojas is called as an Upadhatu (secondary tissue) because the term dhatu applies to the function of Dharana (supporting) and Poshana (nourishing).

Ojas only supports the body, it is not nourishing it. So it cannot be the eighth dhatu.

Formation of Ojas

The best way to explain formation of Ojas is to understand how honey is made. Thousands of bees collect the nectar or essence of thousands of fruits and flowers and stored them into their hives for the formation of honey. Like that Ojas is also the nectar or essence and is the end product of various physiological process.^[9]

Dwelling place of Ojas

Primary location of Ojas is the heart, from where it circulates to and circulated in the entire body. There are two places where Ojas prevails.^[10,11]

1. Para Ojas - Hridya Sthan (in the heart)
2. Apra Ojas - Sarva Sharira Vyapi (all over the body) like ghee in milk or honey in flowers

But in Bhela Samhita, Acharya Bhela has described twelve sites of Ojas in the body. They are as follows – Rasa (plasma), Shonita or Rakta (Blood), Mamsa (muscles), Meda (fats), Asthi (bones), Majja (bone marrow), Shukra (semen), Sweda (sweat), Pitta (GIT secretions), Shleshma (mucoid secretions), Mutra and Purisha (urine and stool).^[12]

Types of Ojas

According to Acharyas ojas are of two types

1. Para Ojas

Acharya Charak mentioned that Hridaya (heart) is dwelling place of Para Ojas. It is best and most important. Its parinama is ashta bindu (eight drops).^[14] It is highly pure (without any waste ingredient). This Para Ojas is responsible for continuation of life.

2. Apra Ojas

Apara Ojas is also known as Shleshmika Ojas because its properties are similar to Shleshma (Kapha). Apara Ojas is present all whole the body. Any diminution in the volume of Apara Ojas will result in the absence of strength of the body and causes of various diseases.^[13]

Qualities of Oja

Acharya Charak has explained ten qualities of Ojas which are similar to milk and ghee while totally opposite to Madya (Alcohol) and Visha (poison). They are as follows -

- Guru (heavy)
- Sheeta (cold)
- Mridu (soft in nature)
- Shlakashna (smooth)
- Bahalam (which spreads into the minute channels)
- Madhura (sweet in nature)
- Sthira (stable or firm)
- Prasanna (pleasant)

- Picchilam (sticky)
- Snigdha (unctuous or oily)^[16]

According to Charak, the color of Oja is predominantly white, slightly reddish or yellow resembling to the Sarpi Varna [Ghee (clarified butter) like appearance]. It is sweet (Madhur) in taste like Madhu (honey) and has the smell of Laja.^[17]

Characteristic features of Ojas

- Somatmaka (cool like moon)
- Snigdha (unctuous or oily)
- Shukla (white in color)
- Sheeta (cool in nature)
- Sthira (stable or firm)
- Sara (flowing or moving and liquid in nature)
- Viviktam (clear or transparent)
- Mridu (soft in nature)
- Mritsnam (slimy)^[18]

Functions of Ojas

Ojas is very useful to maintain the condition of the good health. It not only nourishes all the body constituents but also nourishes the mind. It controls or regulates all the physiological activities and immunity power of the body. In Ayurveda it is believed that life cannot exist without Oja in the body. Some of the functions are Balen, karna nama aatma karya pratipatti 19. etc.

Abnormalities of Ojas

There are the three stages of Oja Vikriti which may occur in various conditions and diseases ranging from physical and mental fatigue to severe types of diseases.

They are as follows

- Ojas Visransa
- Ojas Vyapada
- Ojas Kshaya

Symptoms of Ojas Visransa (first stage)

- Sandhi Vishlesh (looseness of joints)
- Gatra Sada (weakness of the body)
- Dosha Chyavanam (provoked tri doshas move away from their normal seats)
- Kriya Sannirodha (inability to perform normal functions)
- Shrama (lethargy in organs).
- Aprachuryam Kriyanam (It also results in the impairment of Kayik (physical), Vachik (vocal) and Mansik (mental) functions of the body.^[20]

Symptoms of Ojas Vyapad (second stage)

- Stabha Gurugatrata (Stiffness and feeling heaviness in the body,
- Vata Shopha - swelling caused by Vata dosha impairment
- Varna Bheda (change in complexion or discoloration)
- Glani (exhaustion)
- Tandra (drowsiness or stupor)
- Nidra (sleep)^[21]

Symptoms of Ojas Kshaya (third stage)**A. According to Sushruta Samhita**

- Murchha (unconsciousness or fainting)
- Mansakshaya (decrease of muscles)
- Moha (mental disturbance specially in judgment)
- Agyan (loss of sense)
- Pralap (delirium)
- Mrityu (death)^[22]

B. According to Charak samhita

- Bibheti (person is constantly suffer from fear complex)
- Durbalo abhikshanam (physical and mental debility)
- Worries always without apparent reason
- Vyathita Indriya (feels discomfort in the sense organs)
- Duschhaya (developed impaired or loss of complexion of body)
- Durmana (bad mentation or feeble mental stamina)
- Ruksha (dryness or roughness)

- Shama (skin becomes black)
- Kashya (Emaciation of the body).^[23]

Factor responsible for reduction of Ojas

Various factors are responsible for the decreases of Ojas are mentioned in the text of Ayurveda. Some are:

- Ativyayama (excessive physical exercise)
- Anashana (fasting for long period)
- Chinta (constant worry)
- Bhaya (fear)
- Shoka (grief and sorrow)
- Prajagar (keeping awake at nights)
- Excessive elimination of Kapha, Shonita (blood), Shukra (semen) and mala (urine and feces)
- Kala (due to old age)
- Kopa (anger)
- Ativyavaya (excessive sex)^[24-26]

Factor nourishing Ojas

Food and drugs having same qualities to Ojas should be used to enhance quality and quantity of Ojas. Ojas can be increased in the body by following measures;

- Fried foods and alcohol and other drinks should be avoided.
- Hot and spicy foods should be avoided.
- Bitter, sour and pungent substances should be avoided.
- The person should be advised to desist from sexual intercourse during the course of the treatment.
- To promote ojas we need a good Diet and focused on pure foods, referred to as “sattvik” in Ayurveda. The most sattvik foods include organic milk, ghrita (clarified butter) almonds, sesame, honey, rice and fruits.
- Consume the foods or medicine which have Rasayana guna.
- Jeevaniya Gana Aushadhi (Life promoting medicine) like Maamsa Rasa (meat juice), milk and its preparations should be used.^[27,28]

Ojas Vriddhi (Increase of Ojas)

Ojas Vriddhi does not cause any disease; it provides satisfaction, strength, nutrition to whole body.^[29]

- Ojas is the pure and subtle substance that's extracted from food that has been completely digested.
- Ojas provides psychological stability and endurance without which we experience fear and anxiety.
- As Ojas is considered most important cause of strength and which is said to be its function. Aahara is responsible for the strength, complexion and Ojas substance in human beings.

DISCUSSION

In Ayurvedic system of medicine, it is considered that a living system is made of Panchmahabhuta, in the form of Vata, Pitta and Kapha at the physical level and Satwa, Raja and Tama at the mental level. Disease occurs when these transformative processes do not take place properly. The quality of Ojas is affected and the bala of the body effected.³⁰ Treatment is aimed at once again restoring the natural functions of the body. This is achieved by removal of these accumulated wastes and cleansing the channels of circulation. This is known as Shodhana. Restoring the functions of Agni and Doshas is known as Shamana. Finally boosting the bala of the body is known as Urjaskara. Rasayana, it is said is the means of obtaining body tissues of high quality. The nature of Ojas will differ from person to person depending on constitution, Agni, Satva and so on. So the strategy for enhancing bala is also different from person to person. We have just glanced through the Ayurvedic concept of bala superficially. But, one thing would have become clear. The Ayurvedic approach is not fundamentally drug oriented. To develop drugs with immunological effects would be to allopathic Ayurveda. There are many drugs of plant, animal and mineral origin that are attributed with properties to boost the bala of the body.

But to reap the benefits, they have to be applied according to the principles of Ayurveda. So it is more important to understand the Ayurvedic approach to immunology than study some plants that have immune promotive properties.³¹ Walton KG *et al* stated that a key part of Ayurveda that has been obscure to modern science is the substance "Ojas", which the classical texts say maintains balance of the physiology. Also indicates specific steroids or steroid classes are proposed as likely candidates for both the "ordinary" and the "superior"

types of Ojas described in Ayurveda. Current evidence for the functions of these steroids, as well as their role in stress, disease and the maintenance of health; is reviewed. The knowledge of Ayurveda, as recently brought to light by Maharishi, includes methods for recovering and maintaining optimal function of steroidal systems. Such effects may help mediate the improvements in health and increased longevity attributed to Ayurveda and other ancient methods.³² Ojas is the essence of dhatus, which gives strength to the body, improves immunity power and takes care of well being of the body. Ojas is the sap of one's life energy which, when sufficient, is equated with immunity and, when deficient, results in weakness, fatigue and ultimately disease. In a nutshell, Ojas is the sap of the entire physiology and sustains the life of an individual. Therefore Ojas is considered as vital nectar of life.

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