

## OJAS: THE IMMUNOLOGICAL ESSENCE OF WOMANHOOD

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### ABSTRACT

Modern women of reproductive age are increasingly exposed to physical and mental stress, leading to menstrual disorders such as menorrhagia, dysmenorrhea, and PCOS, which adversely affect reproductive health. Ayurveda underscores the importance of *Rutumati Paricharya*—a menstrual code of conduct—for maintaining health, strength, and vitality, yet this practice remains largely neglected. It also highlights *Ojas*, the vital essence present from *Rasa* to *Shukra*, as fundamental to reproductive well-being. The physiological purity of menstrual blood (*Śuddhārtava*) is essential for maintaining hormonal balance and fertility, while pathological variations are described as *Ārtavaduṣṭi*. During pregnancy, *Ojas* is considered crucial for sustenance, paralleling modern science's emphasis on maternal immunological adaptation. *Garbha Saṃskāra*—pre-conceptional care with *Rasāyana dravyas* after *Śodhana*—

enhances the couple's immunity (*Bala*), reducing risks such as implantation failure, abnormal placentation, fetal growth restriction, and pregnancy loss. The role of *Ojas* in *Garbha-utpatti* (embryogenesis) mirrors the immunogenicity of the decidua and trophoblast described in the first trimester. In the second trimester, rapid fetal growth is supported initially by *Garbha Rasa* ("uterine milk") via *Upasneha* and *Upasweda* (diffusion and osmosis), and later by placental–umbilical circulation.

**KEYWORDS:** Ojas, Rasa Dhtau, Artava, Garbha.

## INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, the female menstrual cycle is described as Rituchakra. The term *Chakra* denotes regularity, reflecting the cyclic and periodic onset of menstruation (*Ritusrava*). The health of women is closely dependent on this regular rhythm. For maintaining reproductive health, adequate *Ārtava-utpatti* (formation of menstrual blood) and *Niṣkramana* (its proper expulsion) are essential.

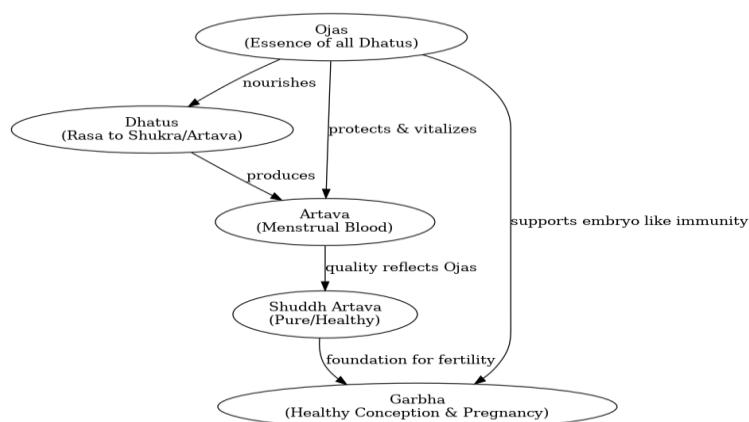
According to vagbhata<sup>[2]</sup>, shonita exists since birth giving the simile of a “Puṣpāphala” (flower bud), he explains that in early life, *Ārtava* accumulates in small amounts in the *Garbha Koṣṭha* (uterus) and becomes evident only at puberty when it is expelled cyclically. This process, known as *Rājapratyavṛtti* (menarche and menstruation), is fundamental to the maintenance of female reproductive health.

Simultaneously, Ayurveda emphasizes the primacy of Ojas, which is said to form first in the body of living beings. This indicates that Ojas is established right at the time of the fertilization of sperm and ovum, signifying that Ojas already exists in the *Sāra* (essence) of both sperm and ovum. Thus, while Ojas provides the foundational vitality and immunity necessary for the formation and proper function of all *dhātus*, including *Ārtava*, a regular and healthy Rituchakra reflects the balanced state of both *Ārtava* and Ojas. Together, these ensure optimal fertility and reproductive health.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Ojas and Rasa

“Rasa ca Oja samkhyataha” According to Acharya Charaka<sup>[2]</sup>, Sthana of Rasa is Hridaya. It does the tarpana, dhaarana, vardhana and circulate through out the body along the Dhamani, and to this Acharya Chakrapani<sup>[3]</sup> comments Hridayasya rasa is called as Ojas.



### Artava – Upadhatu of Rasa

In Ayurveda, Artava (menstrual blood) is a crucial component of female reproductive health and is derived from Rasa Dhatu, the primary essence that nourishes all body tissues. The formation of Artava is a complex process that begins with the digestion and assimilation of food, leading to the production of Ahara Rasa (nutrient fluid). This nutrient fluid, or Ahara Rasa, circulates throughout the body, providing nourishment to each Dhatu (tissue) sequentially. When Ahara Rasa reaches the Rasa Dhatu, it undergoes further refinement and processing, ultimately contributing to the formation of various bodily substances, including Artava.

### Ojas since birth

According to Dalhaṇa<sup>[4]</sup> Ojas exists in a dormant form in the *Śukra* and ovum *Śonita* of the parents. After conception, it becomes manifested as the first body component in intra-uterine life<sup>5</sup> serving as the basic constituent of the embryo (Garbha-sāra) and resembling the morula stage (Kalala).<sup>[6]</sup> The embryo is nourished from this essential component during early development and continues to be nourished and developed throughout gestation.

After birth, Ojas is again formed as the essence of the metabolism of each Dhātu<sup>[7-8]</sup> It is described as the unctuous, purest, and most supreme essence of every Dhātu. Some scholars consider it the Sāra of reproductive tissues<sup>[9]</sup> (*Śukra Dhātu*). Śāringadhara<sup>[10]</sup> regards it as a metabolic by-product (Upadhātu) of the reproductive tissues while Vāgbhaṭa<sup>[11]</sup> opines that it is a metabolic waste product of reproductive components (*Śukra Dhātu*).

According to the context of physical health and vitality, Ojas means “vigor”. In Ayurvedic literatures, Bala, Prakriti and Kapha theses types of words are used as a synonym of Ojas. Charak has mentioned that the kapha in its prakrita avastha (normal state) promotes strength, lubrication, virility, immunity, resistance and stability in the form of Ojas. According to charaka<sup>[12]</sup>, Ojas is the fine essence of all the Dhatus and the superfine essence of Shukra dhatu (reproductive tissue) which are responsible for biological strength, vitality and immunity in the body which make a person physically active. Our physical, mental and spiritual strength is totally dependent on Ojas. This is our best safeguard against mental and physical disease. Ojas gets formed first in the body of living beings.

### Ojas as Shukra Dhātu

Acharya Dalhana and Bhavamisra quote Shukra does the Oja Poshana. According to Acharya Sharangadhara<sup>[13]</sup>, Ojas is Upadhatu of Shukra, According to Vagbhata<sup>[14]</sup>, Ojas is Shukramala, According to Chakrapani, Ojas is Shukra Vishesha and he says Shukra is Manapreenana but Ojas is not a Manapreenana.

### Ojas for Beejotkarsha

Optimised Artavāgni (estrogen activity) within the follicle, supported by adequate Rasa-Sneha, creates a positive feedback on Śukra Agni (LH). This LH activation results in Śukrapuṣṭhi, which is essential to finalize the growth, maturation, and readiness of the selected follicle for ovulation. This activation is seen prior 36 hours to ovulation. This Śukrapuṣṭhi then initiates Ojas release (via Ojo-upadhātwagni/progesterone) in mid-cycle, which is crucial for producing and releasing a viable ovum. In its absence, both Ojas formation and ovulation are impaired. Sushruta<sup>[15]</sup> highlights two key functions—Beejartha and Chyavana —showing Śukra's role in both forming the reproductive seed and enabling its release.

### Ojas in Garbha

When sperm and ovum combine with soul Garbha is formed. In Morula stage of fetus Ojas is present in the form of Garbha Sara.<sup>[16]</sup> 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<sup>[18]</sup>, 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. Ojas gets nourishment after digestion of food. In short we can say that maintenance of Ojas is dependent on Ojas nourishing food and its proper digestion. Good nourishing quality of food with deficient Jatharagni (digestive energy) causes vitiation in the Ojas.

### Role of Ojas during Reproductive age and Menopause

Āhāra rasa, the first dhātu formed after digestion of food by jatharāgni, plays a crucial role in maintaining hormonal balance in the body. The quality and quantity of āhāra rasa determine the proper nourishment of all dhātus and their upadhātus, many of which can be correlated

with endocrine secretions. When *āhāra rasa* is pure and well-formed, it supports normal functioning of endocrine glands, leading to balanced secretion of hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, thyroid hormones, insulin, and cortisol. Conversely, vitiated or deficient *āhāra rasa* due to improper diet or *agnimāndya* results in inadequate *dhātu poṣāṇa*, *ojas kṣaya*, and disturbed hormonal regulation, manifesting as menstrual irregularities, metabolic disorders, and endocrine dysfunctions.

During menopause, decline of *artava* and hormones leads to *dhātu kṣaya*. *Ojas* helps the body adapt to these changes by maintaining strength, immunity, mental stability, and neuro-endocrine balance. Adequate *ojas* reduces menopausal symptoms like hot flashes, anxiety, insomnia, and fatigue. In contrast, *ojas kṣaya* results in severe menopausal complaints such as dryness, irritability, palpitations, and weakness. Hence, preservation of *ojas* is essential for a smooth and healthy menopausal transition.

## DISCUSSION

The concept of *Ojas* represents the finest essence of all *dhātus* and particularly of *Śukra dhātu*, linking it directly with immunity, vitality, and reproductive potential. According to *Ācārya Caraka*, the *hṛdaya* is the primary seat of *Rasa* and the same essence, when refined, is termed *Ojas*.

This *Rasa-Sneha* and optimal *Artavāgni* (estrogenic activity) generate a positive feedback on *Śukra-Agni* (LH) within the follicle, culminating in *Śukrapuṣṭhi*, which is indispensable for full follicular maturation and ovulation. This *Śukrapuṣṭhi* in turn initiates *Ojas* release via *Ojo-Upadhātwagni* (progesterone), essential for the production and release of a viable ovum. Absence of these processes leads to impaired *Ojas* formation and anovulation, underscoring *Ojas* as a determinant of *Beejotkarṣa* (ovum quality) and successful conception. *Suśruta's* mention of *Beejārtha* (follicular development) and *Chyavana* (ovulation) further substantiates *Śukra's* dual role in gametogenesis and ovulation.

In the context of pregnancy, *Ojas* remains the *garbha-sāra* during early fetal life and later circulates between mother and fetus, especially unstable in the eighth month, as mentioned by acharyas. This resonates with the modern understanding of maternal-fetal immunological adaptation. Impaired *āhāra rasa* formation due to *agnimāndya* accelerates *ojas* depletion, thereby worsening neuro-endocrine instability and somatic symptoms. menopausal changes are not merely hormonal but represent a systemic *dhātu-* and *ojas*-related transition.

Maintenance of Ojas after birth is again dependent on proper digestion and metabolism of nourishing food—reflecting the importance of Jatharāgni and diet quality in sustaining immunity and vitality throughout life.

## CONCLUSION

Ojas, described as the finest essence of all dhātus and the supreme sāra of Śukra dhātu, forms the foundation of a woman's vitality, immunity, and reproductive competence. Beginning as a dormant essence in the gametes and manifesting as garbhasāra during embryogenesis, Ojas sustains the developing fetus and protects both mother and child.

In adult life, optimal Artavāgni and Śukrapuṣṭhi ensure timely release of Ojas at mid-cycle, which is essential for follicular maturation, ovulation, and conception. From conception to pregnancy and beyond, its proper formation and preservation through wholesome diet, strong Agni, and balanced lifestyle are crucial for hormonal balance, fertility, and lifelong health.

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