

Importance of *Ashtavidha Sara Pariksha*: A Critical Review

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ABSTRACT

In *Ayurvedic* medicine, the assessment of a patient's vitality and strength is critical for determining appropriate treatment. The *Ashtavidha Sara Pariksha*, or "Examination of the Eight Essences," is an essential diagnostic tool described in the classical texts of Charaka Samhita. It forms a key component of the broader *Dashavidha Atura Pariksha* (Tenfold Examination of the Patient), which evaluates various aspects of a patient's health, including *dosha* imbalances, mental strength, and tissue quality. Among these, *Sara Pariksha* focuses on the evaluation of the vitality and purity of *dhatu*: skin (*Twak*), blood (*Rakta*), muscles (*Mamsa*), fat (*Medas*), bones (*Asthi*), bone marrow (*Majja*), reproductive tissues (*Shukra*), and mental strength (*Sattva*). Each of these types of *Sara* reflects not only the physical health but also the mental and emotional well-being of an individual.

This paper explores the eight types of *Sara*, detailing their characteristics, significance, and the implications they hold for understanding an individual's overall health and prognosis. Additionally, it addresses the limitations of relying solely on external physical appearance for assessing health. It highlights the risk of physicians mistakenly associating a person's external body type—such as muscularity or body size—with strength, without recognizing the deeper, more subtle indicators of strength and vitality present in the *Sara*. By incorporating the principles of *Sara Pariksha*, healthcare providers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of a patient's constitution and imbalances, leading to more accurate diagnoses and individualized treatments. This research paper emphasizes the need for a holistic approach in assessing health, moving beyond surface-level appearances and incorporating the nuanced insights of *Ayurvedic* diagnostic methods.

Key Words *Ayurveda, Dhatu sara, Dasvidhha Atur pariksha, Sara pariksha*

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INTRODUCTION

Dhatu Saar is an *Ayurvedic* concept that refers to the essence or vitality of the body's tissues (*Dhatu*s). In *Ayurveda*, the human body is made up of seven primary tissues (*Dhatu*s)—*Rasa* (lymph), *Rakta* (blood), *Mamsa* (muscle), *Meda* (fat), *Asthi* (bone), *Majja* (bone marrow), and *Shukra* (semen/ova). Each tissue is believed to have a distinct role in maintaining the overall health and balance of the body. The term *Saar*

signifies the "pure" or "most essential" part of each *Dhatu*, which plays a critical role in the functioning of the body.

In *Ayurvedic* diagnosis, the examination of *Dhatu Saar* helps practitioners to assess the health and vitality of these tissues, providing insights into the root causes of diseases. A patient's *Dhatu Saar* is believed to indicate the quality of their tissues and how well the body is performing at a systemic level. The goal is to maintain or restore

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the balance and nourishment of the *Dhatus* for optimal health. If the *Dhatus* are weak or imbalanced, it could lead to various disorders.

The purpose of *Acharya Charaka's Dashavidha Atura Pariksha* (Tenfold Examination of the Patient) is to assess the patient's age, strength, and the balance of *doshas*. This helps determine the appropriate dosage of medicine based on the patient's condition, strengths, and imbalances. Through this examination, the patient's overall vitality and strength are primarily evaluated.

The *Dashavidha Atura Pariksha* includes the following aspects:

1. *Prakriti* (Nature or Constitution)
2. *Vikriti* (Imbalance or Disorder)
3. *Sara* (Quality or Purity of the tissues)
4. *Samhana* (Consolidation or Stability)
5. *Pramana-Satmya* (Measure and Suitability)
6. *Sattva* (Mental strength)
7. *Satmya* (Compatibility)
8. *Aahara Shakti* (Digestive Power)
9. *Vyayama Shakti* (Physical Endurance)
10. *Vaya* (Age)

Just as the examination of *doshas* is based on the patient's *Prakriti*, the quality of the *dhatuis* assessed through *Sara* (the purity or vitality of the tissues).

AIM

The present work aims at understanding the concept of *dhatu sarata* and *sara pariksha* with all available references in its authentic framework.

OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze and understand the concept of *Dhatu sarata* (tissue excellence)
2. To analyze and understand the clinical importance of *Sara pariksha* with classical references.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Caraka Samhita, *Sushruta Samhita* and articles from various Journals containing *dhatu sara* or *sara pariksha* as keyword were searched, collected and critical analysis of the concept of *sara pariksha* in its theoretical framework is carried out.

Sara Pariksha:

Maintenance of the equilibrium of the *dhatuis* (*dosa*, *dhātu* and *malas*) is the very object of the science of life. The weak patients should be given mild and tender therapies and the individuals possessing strong stamina and physique should be administered with strong therapies for proper results. Therefore, the patient should be examined with *dashavidha atura pariksha* described by *Acharya Charak*¹.

The purpose of the description of the eight types of the individuals possessing a particular type of excellence in tissues, is to determine the measurement of their strength, as it is very useful in providing the treatment to any individual. Because it is fallacious to consider an individual to be strong or weak either from his emaciated body or from the large and small size of their bodies. Some of these individuals may be like the

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ants, who have a small body and look emaciated but can carry too heavy load. Thus the *sara parikṣā* (examination of an individual according to the excellence of various tissues) is recommended².

To determine the strength or vitality of a person, eight types of *Sara* are described, as follows:

1. *Twak Sara* (contextually *rasadhātu sara*)
2. *Rakta Sara* (Essence of the blood)
3. *Mamsa Sara* (Essence of the muscles)
4. *Medas Sara* (Essence of the fat)
5. *Asthi Sara* (Essence of the bones)
6. *Majja Sara* (Essence of the bone marrow)
7. *Shukra Sara* (Essence of the reproductive tissues)
8. *Sattva Sara* (Essence of the mental strength or consciousness)

These qualities are examined carefully in each individual to assess their overall vitality and strength. *Acharya Kashyapa* has mentioned nine types of *Sara* with *Oja Sara* as an additional kind of *Sara*³. *Acharya Vagbhata* has only given the types of *Sara* without describing their characteristics⁴.

1. *Twak Sara* (Essence of the Skin): Individuals having the excellence of *twak* literally meaning skin but contextually meaning *rasadhātu*.

The characteristics of a person with *Twak Sara* are as follows:

1. *Snigdha* (unctuous)
2. *Ślakṣna* (smooth)
3. *Mrdu* (soft)
4. *Prasanna* (clear)

5. *Sūkṣma* (fine)

6. *Alpa* (less numerous)

7. *Gambhira* (deep rooted hairs)

8. *Sukumāra* (tender hairs)

9. *Prabhāyukta* (lustrous skin)

Twaksāra individuals are endowed with:

Sukha (happiness, comfort)

Saubhagya (good fortunes and prosperity)

Aiswarya (power and wealth)

Upabhoga (enjoyment and luxury)

Buddhi (intelligence)

Vidyā (knowledge and education)

Arogya (health)

Praharsa (exitement or pleasure)

Ayusya (longevity of life⁵).

The skin of *Twaksaar purush* is smooth, soft, and pleasant to look at; it is fine, thin, deep, delicate, with visible hair follicles, and has a radiant glow. Having such a quality of skin is an indicator of happiness, prosperity, wealth, enjoyment, intelligence, knowledge, good health, cheerfulness, and longevity⁶.

2. *Rakta Sara* (Essence of the Blood): The signs and symptoms of persons endowed with pure blood are clarity in complexion, normal functioning of sense organs, natural urge for the objects of sense organs, unobstructed digestion and motion, happiness, contentment (*tuṣṭi*) or and nourishment and strength.

According to *Acharya shusruta* the person, who has unctuous and coppery red coloured nails (due to appropriate quantity of hemoglobin) eyes, palate, tongue, lips, palms and soles is to be

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considered is to be considered as raktasāra (persons of excellence of blood⁷).

Describing *raktasāra* personalities *Caraka* narrates that the individuals are characterized by unctuousness, red colour, beautiful dazzling appearance of ears, eyes, face, tongue, nose, lips, soles of feet and palms, nails, forehead and genital organs. Such individuals are endowed with happiness great genius enthusiasm, tenderness (*sukumārata*) moderate strength and inability to face difficulties⁸.

3. **Mamsa Sara (Essence of the Muscles):**

Mansa Saar purush are characterized by stability, heaviness, beautiful appearance and plumpness of temples (*sankha*), fore-head (*lalāra*) nape (*krkatikā*), eyes (*aksi*), cheeks (*ganda*), jaws, neck (*grīva*), shoulder (*skandha*), abdomen (*udara*). axilla (*kaksā*), chest and joints of upper and lower limbs, being cover with flesh, these individuals are endowed with forgiveness (*kṣamā*), patience (*dhyti*), non-greediness (*alaulya*), knowledge (*vidyam*), wealth (*vittam*), simplicity (*ārjavam*), happiness (*sukha*) strength (*bala*) and longevity (*dīrgha-ayu*⁹).

Acharya Shuśruta describes the persons having *māmsasāra* quality as *achidragātra* and *gūdhāsthi-sandhi* (he who has well grown body, bones and bony joints and well developed muscle. This type of *Mamsa Sara* indicates endurance, calmness, a lack of greed, wealth, knowledge, happiness, simplicity, good health, strength, and longevity¹⁰.

4. **Medas Sara (Essence of the Fat):** *Acharya Caraka* emphasizes that the patient should be examined with reference to *sāra* or the excellence of their *dhatu*s. Individuals having the excellence of *medas* or adipose tissue are characterized by the abundance of unctuousness in complexion, voice, eyes, hair of the head and other parts of the body, nail, teeth, lips, urine and faeces. Such individuals are endowed with wealth, power, happiness, enjoyment, charity, simplicity and delicate habits¹¹.

According to *Suśruta Samhitā*, an individual, whose urine and sweat are unctuous, voice is pleasant, has body of big size and unable to tolerate exertion is to be under-stood a *medas sāra* (an individual of excellence of fat) *purusa*¹².

5. **Asthi Sara (Essence of the Bones):**

The characteristics of a person with *Asthi Sara* are as follows:

The heels, ankles, knees, elbows, shoulders, cheeks, head, body joints, bones, nails, and teeth are thick and strong.

Such individuals are typically energetic, hardworking, resilient, have a sturdy physique, and tend to live a long life¹³.

According to *Acharya Sushrut*, *Asthisaar purush* has a large head and shoulders and his teeth, jaws, bones and nails are thick and strong¹⁴.

6. **Majja Sara (Essence of the Bone Marrow):**

Persons having the excellence of *majja* are characterized by softness of organs, strength, unctuous complexion and voice and robust, long and rounded joints. Such individuals

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Table 1 Characteristics of *Sarata*

S.No	Sarata	Charak Samhita	Sushruta Samhita
1	Rasa	Skin - Unctuous, smooth, soft, clear, lustrous Hair - Fine, sparse, deeprooted, delicate Mental features - Happiness, good fortune, power, enjoyment, intelligence, learning, health, cheerfulness, longevity.	Skin and hair glistening and soft.
2	Rakta	Ear, eye, face, tongue, nose, lips, palm of hands, sole of feet, nails, forehead and genitals are unctuous, red and brilliant Mental features - Happiness, sharp intellect, magnanimity, tenderness, moderate strength, lack of endurance and tolerance to heat	Unctuous and coppery nails, eyes, palate, tongue, lips, palm and soles
3	Mansa	Temples, forehead, nape, eyes, cheek, jaws, neck, shoulder, abdomen, axilla, chest, hands, feet and joints-equipped with firm heavy and good looking muscles. Mental features - Forbearance, restraint, lack of greed, wealth, learning, happiness, simplicity, health, strength and longevity	Body without any depression, the bony joints is concealed and muscles are well developed
4	Meda	Complexion, voice, eyes, hair, skin hairs, nails, teeth, lips, urine and faeces- Unctuous Mental features - Wealth, power, happiness, enjoyment, charity, simplicity and delicacy in dealings.	Unctuous urine and sweat, melodious voice, fleshy body and intolerance to exertion
5	Asthi	Heels, ankles, knees, elbows, collarbones, chin, head and joints, Bones, nails and teeth- prominent and large Mental features - Enthusiastic, active, enduring, having strong and firm body as well as longevity	Big head and shoulders and firm teeth, jaw, bone and nails
6	Majja	Soft organs, strong, unctuous complexion and sweet voice, prominent, long and rounded joints Mental features - Long-lived, strong and end owed with learning, wealth, understanding, progeny and respect	Person is not lean, has superior strength, melodious and resonant voice, auspicious Features and big eyes.
7	Shukra	Charming person with charm eyes as if filled with milkimmensely exhilarated. Teeth-Unctuous, rounded, firm, even and compact having pleasant and unctuous complexion and voice brilliant, having prominent buttocks. Mental features Liked by women, are strong and endowed with happiness, supremacy, health, wealth, honour and progeny.	Unctuous, compact and white bone, teeth and nails; with numerous progeny

are endowed with longevity, strength, learning wealth, knowledge, progeny and honour¹⁵.

According to *Acharya Shusruta*, the individual, who is not emaciated, who has good strength, pleasant and deep(loud) voice, and lustrous, wide eyes should be taken as person of excellence of bone marrow (Majja dhatu¹⁶).

7. Shukra Sara (Essence of the Reproductive Tissue): The characteristics of a person with *Shukra Sara* are as follows:

They are gentle in nature and possess a kind, compassionate gaze. Their eyes are white, resembling milk, and appear full of kindness. Such individuals are always cheerful and content. Their teeth are smooth, round, firm, uniform in shape, and solid. The front edges of their teeth are even. Their body complexion and voice are clear, smooth, and pleasant to observe and hear, they are strong and endowed with happiness, power,¹⁷ health, wealth, honour and offsprings¹⁷.

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According to *Acharya Shusruta*, he who has smooth, well grown and white coloured bones, teeth and nails, more sexual desire and offsprings, should be understood as *shukrasara purush* or person of excellence

8. Sattva Sara (Essence of Mental Strength): The characteristics of a person with *Sattva Sara* are as follows:

They possess a strong memory, devotion, gratitude, intelligence, purity, high enthusiasm, wit, and calmness. They exhibit valor in battle and perform courageous acts. Such individuals do not experience sadness or despair. Their movements are steady, and their intellect and actions are profound. They consistently focus their mind and intellect on noble and beneficial pursuits. These are the qualities of a *Sattva Sara* person. The qualities mentioned correspond directly to the characteristics found in a person with *Sattva Sara*¹⁸.

DISCUSSION

The *Sara Pariksha*, or examination of *Sara*, is a key diagnostic tool in Ayurveda used to assess an individual's overall health and strength. It helps in understanding the quality of each *Dhatu* and its impact on the individual's well-being, guiding treatment plans and therapies.

A person endowed with all the types of *Sara* is more powerful, more honored, able to endure hardships, and confident in their own abilities in all tasks. Such a person continuously engages their mind and intellect in beneficial and noble

activities, has a stable and well-organized body, and maintains a proper gait while walking.

When examining the body alone, physicians can fall into the trap of misunderstanding the strength of a person. For example, they might assume that a person with a well-developed, muscular body is strong, or that a person with a thin body is weak. Similarly, they might think that someone with a large body is very strong, while someone with a small body will be weak. Such assumptions can lead to misconceptions.

However, it is often observed that individuals with small and thin bodies can be exceptionally strong. For example, an ant, despite its tiny and slender body, can carry many times its own weight. Similarly, some people with small and slender bodies can possess great strength, while individuals with large or heavy bodies might have less strength. This is why it is important to assess strength through the *Sara* examination, rather than relying solely on physical appearance.

CONCLUSION

The examination of the eight *Sara* (essences) in Ayurvedic practice, as detailed in *Acharya Charaka's Dashavidha Atura Pariksha*, provides a profound and holistic approach to understanding an individual's overall vitality and health. Unlike conventional methods that rely solely on physical appearance or body size, the *Sara Pariksha* delves deeper into the intrinsic qualities of the body and mind, offering a more comprehensive assessment of a person's strength, endurance, and resilience.

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Each of the eight types of Sara from *Twak Sara* (skin essence) to *Sattva Sara* (mental essence) plays a critical role in revealing the underlying health of tissues and organs, as well as the mental and emotional state of the individual.

The importance of this diagnostic tool lies in its ability to move beyond superficial assessments, such as the assumption that large or muscular bodies automatically equate to greater strength. As highlighted in the research, such misconceptions can be misleading, as individuals with smaller or thinner physiques may possess remarkable internal strength and vitality, while those with more imposing bodies may not necessarily exhibit superior endurance or health. By focusing on the assessment of Sara, physicians are better equipped to gauge a person's true vitality, providing more accurate diagnoses and personalized treatments.

In conclusion, the Sara Pariksha offers a refined, individualized approach to understanding health in Ayurveda. Its integration into modern clinical practice could serve as a valuable tool for practitioners, encouraging a deeper, more nuanced understanding of patient health that goes beyond external appearances. This approach fosters a holistic view of wellness, taking into account both the physical and mental dimensions of health, which is essential for effective treatment and long-term well-being. Ultimately, Sara Pariksha reinforces the wisdom of Ayurveda in emphasizing balance, purity, and vitality as key elements of overall health, highlighting the

importance of internal harmony in achieving optimal strength and longevity.

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