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Role of Ojas in Vyadhikshamatva: Clinical Relevance from an Ayurvedic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

According to Ayurveda human body is constituted of seven *Dhatu* (tissues). Which are *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja* and *Shukra*. These *Dhatu* are formed after digestion of ingested food (*Ahara*). When all the *Dhatus* are formed, the last essences of these *Dhatus* which form is called as *Ojas* or *Oja*.

Ojas is regarded in Ayurveda as the supreme essence (*Sara*) of all the *Dhatus* which gives strength (*Bala*) to the body, vigour, vitality, improves immunity power and takes care of well-being of the body. It is responsible for maintaining physical health, mental stability, and resistance against diseases. *Vyadhikshamatva*, a unique Ayurvedic concept described primarily by *Acharya Charaka*, refers to the body's intrinsic capacity to resist the onset, progression, and recurrence of disease.

Ojas serves as the physiological foundation of *Vyadhikshamatva* and represents a central principle in Ayurvedic preventive and promotive medicine. Preservation and enhancement of *Ojas* through appropriate *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle), *Rasayana* therapy, and mental well-being can strengthen *Vyadhikshamatva* and contribute to sustainable health. *Ojas Kshaya* on the other hand, weaken the body given to many diseases to develop, shortens life span and even kills the person. Integrating these classical Ayurvedic concepts with modern biomedical understanding may provide valuable insights for developing holistic strategies for disease prevention, immune support, and overall wellness.

Key Words *Ojas*, *Vyadhikshamatva*, *Ayurveda*, *Bala*, *Immunity*, *Disease Resistance*, *Dhatus*, *Physiological Resilience*, *Health Promotion*

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda describes health as a state of equilibrium among *Doṣa*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*, maintained by vital physiological principles. Among these, *Ojas* is regarded as the essential life-sustaining substance responsible for vitality, strength, and resistance to disease.

Ayurveda considers health to be a state of balance between *Doṣa*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*, supported by normal physiological functions. Among these fundamental

concepts, *Ojas* holds special importance as it represents vitality, strength, and the body's capacity to resist disease. The term *Ojas* denotes vital energy or vigour and plays an important role in maintaining health. *Acharya Sushrut* regards *Ojas* as the finest essence (*paramatejas*) of the seven *Dhatus* and associates it with *Bala*, the biological strength of the individual¹.

Ojas is regarded in Ayurveda as an important factor responsible for maintaining strength, vitality, and resistance to disease. It contributes to the body's

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ability to withstand pathological changes and protect itself from harmful external factors. Since *Ojas* is considered essential for sustaining life and energy, its depletion may lead to impaired resistance and increased susceptibility to disease. Various disorders, including conditions such as AIDS, Diabetes Mellitus, *Pandu*, *Rajayakshma*, and *Grahani*, may be associated with features resembling reduced immunity or *Ojakshaya*. The term *Vyadhikshamatva* denotes the capacity of an individual to resist or withstand disease (*Vyadhi* – disease; *Kshamatva* – resistance). Ayurvedic literature explains *Vyadhikshamatva* as an important determinant of the body's ability to prevent disease, resist its progression, and recover from illness².

Vyadhikshamatva is supported by balanced *Doṣas*, properly nourished *Dhatus*, normal *Agni*, and unobstructed *Srotas*, along with other factors that maintain physiological balance. Ayurveda primarily emphasizes the preservation of health and maintenance of *Arogya*. The body's physical and mental ability to resist disease plays an important role in preventing illness and promoting faster recovery. *Ojas*, situated primarily in the *Hṛdaya* and distributed throughout the body, is essential for maintaining strength and vitality. It is regarded as the most refined and superior essence of the *Dhatus*, comparable to the ghee naturally present in milk. It represents *bala*, *veerya*, *prana*, *prakriti* and *kapha* of body.

Ojas is considered the basis of physical, mental, and spiritual strength. It is often correlated with immunity in modern science. Ayurveda emphasizes the maintenance of *Ojas* and the effects of its increase, decrease, or pathological changes on the body. Thus, *Ojas* may be regarded as the underlying factor responsible for *Bala* (strength) and overall vitality³.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To study the concept of *Vyadhikshamatva* and *oja*.
2. To study the fundamental points of *Oja* as physiological and pathological view.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This work is a conceptual narrative review based on classical Ayurvedic texts and modern biomedical literature.

Classical Sources-

Charaka Saṁhita

Susruta Saṁhita

Ashṭanga Hridaya

Modern Sources-

Peer-reviewed biomedical literature focusing on Immunology.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Etymology and Conceptual Meaning

The word *Ojas* is derived from the Sanskrit root “*uj*”, meaning vigor, strength, or vitality⁴.

Definition-

The supreme essence of the *dhatus* from *rasa* to *Shukra* is called *Ojas*, which is the source of all strength in the body⁵.

2. Synonyms of *Ojas*

Classical synonyms include:

Bala – Strength

Praṇa – Life force

Dhatu-tejas – Radiance of tissues

Rasa-sheṣa– Essence of *rasa*

Jivana-soṇita – Vital blood⁶

Formation:

The best way to describe formation of *Oja* is to understand how honey is made. Nearly ten to twenty

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thousand bees collect the nectar or essence of thousands of fruits and flowers and store them into their hives for the formation of honey. Similarly according to *Charaka*, (during embryogenesis) the synthesis of *Oja* is at the time of fertilization, when *Shukra* (sperm) fuses with *Shonita* (ovum) *paka* of *shukradhatu* (both *Shukra* and *Shonita*) takes place (fertilization) and two things formed i.e. *sara* (nutrient materials) and *mala* (excretory products). This *Oja* will perform its function of *avastambha* and support the life of *garbha* (fetus). After that *rasa* and other *dhatu*s, their finest essence (*Dhatu Sara*) ultimately contributes to the formation of *Ojas*, which is regarded as the supreme essence of all the *Dhatu*s⁷.

Ahara Rasa (Nutrient essence)



Rasa Dhatu



Rakta Dhatu



Mamsa Dhatu



Meda Dhatu



Asthi Dhatu



Majja Dhatu



Sukra Dhatu



Supreme essence



Ojas



Bala • Immunity • Vitality • Longevity

Seat:

Primary location of *oja* is the heart, from where it circulates in the entire body. There are two places where *ojas* prevails.

1. Para Oja - Hridya Sthana (in the heart).
2. Aparā Oja - Sarva Sharir Vyapi (in all over body)⁸.

Properties:

Acharaya *Charaka* has explained ten properties of *oja* which are similar to milk and ghee while totally opposite to *madya* (Alcohol) and *visha* (Poison).

They are as follow.

- *Guru* (heavy)
- *Sheeta* (cold)
- *Mridu* (soft in nature)
- *Shlakashna* (smooth in nature)
- *Bahalam* (which spreads into the minute channels)
- *Madhura* (sweet in nature)
- *Sthira* (stable)
- *Prasanna* (pleasant)
- *Pichhilam* (sticky)
- *Snigdha* (unctuous)⁹.

Different views regarding the nature of Ojas-

1. Ojas as the Eighth Dhatu

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Since the *Dhatus* are responsible for maintaining and nourishing the body, and *Ojas* is essential for sustaining life, some scholars have regarded it as the eighth *dhatu*. It is considered the finest essence of all the *Dhatus*, with a particularly close association with *Sukra Dhatu*.

2. *Ojas* as an *Upadhatu*

According to certain authorities, including *Sharangadhara*, *Ojas* differs from the primary *Dhatus* in its principal function. While *Dhatus* contribute to the nourishment and structural integrity of the body, *Ojas* is chiefly responsible for maintaining life (*pranadhara*). On this basis, it has been described as an *Upadhatu*.

3. *Ojas* as the *Mala* of *Shukra*

A few scholars have proposed that *Ojas* may be considered a waste product (*mala*) associated with *Shukra Dhatu*. However, this view has limited acceptance because the classical description of *Ojas* emphasizes its vital role in sustaining life, and its severe depletion is associated with fatal consequences.

4. *Ojas* as the *Mala* of *Kapha*

Another interpretation identifies *Ojas* as the *mala* of *Kapha*. This classification is primarily based on the similarities between *Ojas* and *Kapha* in terms of their properties and physiological characteristics.

5. *Ojas* as an *Upadhatu* of *Kapha*

Some scholars have further described *Ojas* as an *Upadhatu* derived from *Kapha*. This opinion is also based on the considerable similarity observed between the qualities and functions attributed to *Ojas* and *Kapha*.

6. *Ojas* as the ultimate essence of *Dhatu* Metabolism

Another perspective describes *Ojas* as the most refined product of the sequential transformation of the *Dhatus*. According to this concept, it represents the final and superior essence generated through the process of *Dhatu* nourishment and metabolism.

Types of *Ojas*

1. *Para Ojas*

Location: Heart (*Hridaya*)

Quantity: Eight drops (*Aṣṭa - bindu*)

Nature: Extremely subtle

Function: Direct sustainer of life

Loss of even one drop leads to immediate death.

Thus, *Para Ojas* is indispensable for survival.

2. *Apara Ojas*

Circulates throughout the body

Quantity: Approximately half to One *Anjali*

Comparable in quality to normal *Kapha*

Also termed *Shleṣmika Ojas*

Functions:

- Maintains immunity
- Supports tissue integrity
- Preserves systemic strength
- Support physiological resilience and disease resistance.

Functional Significance of *Ojas*

Ojas supports: Physical strength (*sharirikabala*), mental stability, tissue nourishment, immune defense, maintenance of complexion, longevity. Classically, *Ojas* is directly equated with strength:

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Meaning: Strength itself is *Ojas*.

In modern interpretative frameworks, *Ojas* may be correlated with: Immune competence, Endocrine balance, Neuro-immunological resilience, Systemic homeostasis.

Pathology of *Ojas* (*Oja - Vikṛiti*)

Three major pathological conditions are described:

1. *Ojo - Vyapat* (Vitiation)
2. *Ojo - Visransa* (Displacement)
3. *Ojo - Kṣhaya* (Depletion)

There symptoms are,

1. Symptoms of *Ojo - Visransa* (1stStage)¹⁰

- *Sandhi vishlesha* (Looseness of joints)
- *Gatrasada* (Weakness of the body)
- *Doshachyavanam* (Tri doshas move away from their normal seats)
- *Kriyasannirodha* (Inability to perform normal functions)
- *Shrama* (Lethargy in organs)
- *Aprachuryamkriyanam* (It also results in the impairment of *Kayik*, *Vachika*, *Mansik* function of the body)

2. Symptoms of *Ojo - Vyapada* (2ndStage)¹¹

- *Stabhagurugatrata* (Stiffness and feeling heaviness in the body)
- *Vatashopha* (Swelling caused by Vata dosha impairment)
- *Varnabheda* (Change in complexion or discoloration)
- *Glani* (Exhaustion)
- *Tandra* (Drowsiness)
- *Nidra* (Sleep)

3. Symptoms of *Ojo-kshaya* (3rdStage)

A. According to *Acharaya Sushruta*¹²

- *Murchha* (Unconsciousness)
- *Mansakshaya* (Atrophy of muscles)
- *Moha* (Mental disturbance specially in judgment)
- *Agyan* (Loss of sense)
- *Pralap* (Delirium)
- *Mrityu* (Death)

B. According to *Acharaya Charak*¹³

- *Bibheti* (Person suffer from fear complex)
- *Durbaloabhikshanam* (Physical and mental debility)
- *Vyathitaindriya* (Feel discomfort in the sense organ)
- *Duskhaya* (Abnormal complexion)
- *Durmana* (Bad mentations)
- *Ruksha* (Dryness)
- *Kshama* (Low pitched voice)
- *Kshaya* (Emaciation of the body)

Ojavridhhi -

Ojavridhhi doesn't cause any disease, it provides satisfaction, strength, nutrition to whole body. It nourishes and strengthens the entire body while promoting a sense of well-being. It is regarded as the finest and most refined essence obtained after complete digestion of food. This subtle essence contributes to mental stability, emotional resilience, and the ability to cope with stress; its deficiency may result in fear, anxiety, and reduced psychological endurance.

Factor responsible for reduction of *Oja*

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Acharaya had mentioned about the causes of decrease of *Oja* i.e.

- *Ativyayama* – excessive physical exercise.
- *Anashana* – fasting for long period.
- *Chinta* – constant worry.
- *Pramitashana* – consuming very less quantity of food.
- *Vata-atapa seven* – excessive exposure to heavy blows of wind and sun heat.
- *Bhaya* – grief and sorrow.
- *Rukshapana*– drinking strong wines.
- *Prajagara* – keeping awake at nights.
- Excessive elimination of *Kapha*, *Shonita*, *Shukra* and *mala*.
- *Kala* - due to old age.
- *Abhighata* - mental or physical trauma or injury to *Marma* or vital parts of the body.
- *Ativyavaya* - excessive sex¹⁴.

Vyadhikshamatva:

One of the important concepts described in Ayurvedic literature is *Vyadhikshamatva*. *Acharya Charaka* introduced this concept to explain the body's ability to resist disease. It emphasizes that individuals differ in their susceptibility to illness because the strength of the *Doṣas* and the capacity of the body to withstand disease are not the same in everyone.

The definition of *vyadhikshamatva* is given by *Chakrapani*, that *vyadhikshamatva* denotes the resisting power of the body, which reduces the strength of diseases those are already manifested and prevention of diseases from developing or becoming manifest. In this definition two

significant terms *vyadhi* - *bala* - *virodhitva* and *vyadhiutpada* - *Pratibandhakatva* have been used in a particular order¹⁵.

❖ *Vyadhi-bala-virodhitva* - To reduce the strength of diseases those are already manifested or resistance against the strength of disease.

❖ *Vyadhiutpada-Pratibandhakatva* - To prevent a disease from developing or becoming manifest.

Bala: The *vyadhikshamatva* mostly depends on *bala* that opposes the disorder state of *doshas*. *Acharya Charaka* describes that the maintenance of health depends entirely upon the *bala*. This strength is attainable from three sources¹⁶.

1. Sahaja Bala (Constitutional strength): In Ayurveda, genetic factors are inherited from parents and influence the child's health. The cell is considered *Beeja*, the nucleus as *Beejabhaga*, and chromosomes as *Avayava*. Healthy parents may pass healthy traits, while genetic susceptibility to diseases may be inherited by the child. Ayurvedic measures may help reduce or prevent the effects of such inherited defects.

2. Kalaja Bala (Temporal strength): According to *Kalaja Bala*, immunity is influenced by factors such as time of day, season, and age. Physical strength is generally higher during the morning, spring season, and younger age, while it tends to decline during the evening, summer, and old age. *Kalaja Bala* also considers the influence of the time and place of birth on an individual's strength and immunity. Environmental and climatic conditions of certain

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regions may further contribute to better health and stronger immunity.

E.g - Places with an abundance of water, cool and pleasant climatic conditions are *Kapha* dominating areas and accord to stronger immunity.

3. *Yuktikrita Bala* (Acquired strength): It represents acquired immunity, in which disease can be defended against through Ayurveda. It concentrate on three plans for acquiring or enhancing immunity (*Oja*).

A. *Rasayana* is health promoting and rejuvenates the whole physiology, producing resistance against disease both physically and mentally.

B. *Vyayama* (exercise) - by doing daily exercise person can enhance its digestion, and metabolism which in turn promote person immunity.

C. *Satmya* (suitability) - Adapting to wholesome diet, lifestyle and giving up unwholesome diet and lifestyle, to which the physiology has been addicted since birth, also enhances immunity.

contribute to sustainable health. Integrating these classical Ayurvedic concepts with modern biomedical understanding may provide valuable insights for developing holistic strategies for disease prevention, immune support, and overall wellness.

CONCLUSION

Ojas serves as the physiological foundation of *Vyadhikshamatva* and represents a central principle in Ayurvedic preventive and promotive medicine. Preservation and enhancement of *Ojas* through appropriate *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle), *Rasayana* therapy, and mental well-being can strengthen *Vyadhikshamatva* and

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