

A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON OJAS AND IT'S CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE : A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a great tradition with sound philosophical, experiential and experimental basis. Increased side effects, lack of curative treatment for several chronic diseases, high cost of new drugs, microbial resistance and emerging diseases are some reasons for renewed public interest in alternative medicine. It is a science of health & healthy living. Ayurveda has two main goals i.e. protection and promotion of health and cure from disease.

In Ayurveda, we find all the fundamentals of immunity and their utility to prevent and to cure the disease, respectively. Vyadhikshamatva (immunity) is illustrated as the power of resistance capable enough to check the progress occurrence or recurrence of the disease.

Ojas is considered as responsible for Vyadhikshamatva (immunity). Due to the loss of ojas, persons are susceptible to other intercurrent diseases. Hence, an adequate exposition of the concept of ojas concerning immunity is essential. Ojas It is an essence of seven dhatus and is responsible for the strength of an individual. It is one among the seats of prana. It is itself synonymized as bala. It is an independent principle of Ayurveda, the principle it supports life, which protects life from various diseases.

KEYWORDS- Ayurveda , Vyadhikshamatva, ojas, dhatus, bala.

INTRODUCTION

Many people are prone to disease due to their faulty dietary habits, change in climate, on the other hand, some people remain healthy in spite of breaking dietary rules or changes in climate and they do not get affected by many diseases. Many microorganisms enter the human body through air, water, soil but fail to produce disease due to immune response present in the living body. The most important thing in relation to health and disease is vyadhikshamatva(immunity) of the body.

Ojas is considered as essence of seven Dhatus or equivalent to Bala or Sleshma. Ojas can also be considered as living radiant energy present in human body. In Ayurveda literature the term Oja is not clearly explained by Ayurveda community.

Ojas is final and excellence of the product dhatu and vyadhikshamatva(immunity) depends on it. Innate immunity may be correlated to sahaja bala and kalaja bala may be correlated to acquired immunity. Here is a review of Ayurvedic texts regarding immunity and concept of Vyadhikshamatva which depends on normal dosa, equilibrium state of dhatu, normal agni bala and ojas etc.

Ojas in Ayurveda is considered as quintessence of all the seven Dhatus and represent the Bala or biological strength which include immune strength to.ⁱ Charka includes Oja in Dash Pranaayatan.ⁱⁱ Ojas is considered as resistance to decay and degeneration of body and immunity against the disease. The disease such as AIDS, Diabetes etc., manifest feature of decrease immunity or rather Oja Kshaya. In Ayurveda, Ojas has been considered vital in the defense mechanism of the body. In conditions like diabetes mellitus and malnutrition, where loss of Ojas is a constant feature, people are known to be susceptible to various other interrelated and degenerative diseases or recurrent infections.

In this changing scenario it is high time to study concept of Ojas in its totality for this purpose available Ayurveda literature on concept of Ojas, study of specific diseases involving Ojas in their pathophysiology, study of effect of treatment procedures used in these diseases on Ojas and utility of Ojas augmentation in treatment of these diseases are few aspects which are needed to be studied.

This will not only help to understand concept of Ojas but may also improve chances of better treatment options for managing these diseases. Role of Ojas in maintaining healthy status as well as positive health is also one of the important aspects in prophylaxis of diseases

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Present work has been done based on critical review of classical information, published research works, modern literature and research works conducted at various institutes. The possible correlation has been made between collected information and has been presented in systematic way.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To study a conceptual review of Oja and it's clinical importance through ayurveda.

DISCUSSION

PROPERTIES OF OJAS

COLOUR:

According to Sushruta, it is Sukla Varna (clear white) whereas other Acharyas have mentioned three colours of Ojas i.e., a clear substance with the tinge of red and yellow.

ODOUR:ⁱⁱⁱ

Lajagandhi i.e., with the smell of Laja. Taste: According to Charka, its taste is similar to that of honey i.e. Madhurasa (sweet) with slight Kashayatva (astringent).

PLACE OF OJA^{iv,v}

The main seat of Ojas is heart from where it circulates in the whole body. There are two places where Ojas prevails.

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

FORMATION OF OJA^{vi}

The best way to describe formation of Ojas is similar to the process of formation of honey. Bees collect the nectar or essence of thousands of fruits and flowers and store them into their hives for the formation of honey. Similarly, Ojas is also the nectar or essence and is the end product of various physiological process.

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF OJAS^{vii}

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).

QUALITIES OF OJA^{viii}

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).

CLASSIFICATION OF OJA

According to Acharya Chakrapani there are two types of Oja found in the body.

1. PARA OJA^{ix}-

Acharya Charak mentioned that Hridya (heart) is dwelling place of Para Ojas. It is best and most important. Its measurement is Ashta bindu (eight drops). This Para Oja is responsible for continuation of life, therefore whenever, there is any decrease or loss in the volume of Para Oja it would give rise to grave diseases and instantaneous death of that person.

2. APARA OJA^x-

Apara Oja is also known as Shleshmika Oja as its properties are similar to that of Shleshma (Kapha). Apara Ojas is present all over the body. According to Acharya Charak, the quantity of Oja in a healthy individual is Ardhanjali. The seat of Apar Oja is the ten vessels connected with Hridya. Any diminution in the volume of Apara Oja will result in the absence of strength of the body and causes of various diseases.^{xi}

AETIOLOGY OF OJA KSHAYA^{xii, xiii, xiv}

1. Ativyayama (Excessive physical exercise)
2. Anashana (Fasting for long period)
3. Chinta (Constant worry)
4. Consumption of food which are dry – moisture less in nature
5. Pramitashana (Consuming very less quantity of food)
6. Vata-atapa sevan (Excessive exposure to heavy blows of wind and sun heat)
7. Bhaya (Grief and sorrow)
8. Rukshapan (Drinking strong wines)

9. Prajagar (Keeping awake at nights)
10. Excessive elimination of Kapha, Shonita, Shukraandmala.
11. Kala- due to old age.
12. Abhigata (Mental or physical Trauma or injury to Marma or vital parts of the body)
13. Kopa (Anger)
14. Ativyavaya (Excessive sex)

CLASSIFICATION OF OJOVIKRITI

Oja may get deranged or may suffer from quantity and qualitative loss. According to Sushruta Ojovikruti is observed in the form of these three types are Ojovisransa, Vyapata and Ojaksaya. Where the Lakshanas of Vishramsas indicate beginning of Karmahani, that of Vyapad indicate Dosh Dushti also that produces Ojogunahani and Kshaya indicates Pramanatahani.

Acharya Charak also explain the symptoms of Ojakshaya, the three stages of Oja Vikriti may occur in various conditions and diseases ranging from physical and mental fatigue to acute and chronic, mild and severe types of diseases.

I. Ojas Visransa Symptoms ^{xv}	II. Ojas Vyapad Symptoms ^{xvi}
1. Sandhi Vishlesh (looseness of joints)	1. Stabha Gurugatrata- (Stiffness and feeling heaviness in the body)
2. Gatra Sada (weakness of the body)	2. Vata Shopha (Swelling caused by Vata dosha impairment)
3. Dosha Chyavanam (provoked Tri doshas move away from their normal seats)	3. Varna Bheda (change in complexion or discoloration)
4. Kriya Sannirodha (inability to perform normal function)	4. Glani (exhaustion)
	5. Tandra (drowsiness or stupor)
	6. Nidra (sleep)

III. Ojas Kshaya Symptoms

According to Acharya Sushruta ^{xvii}	According to Acharya Charak ^{xviii}
1. Murchha (unconsciousness or fainting)	1. Bibheti (person is constantly suffer from fear complex)
2. Mansakshaya (decrease of muscles)	2. Durbalo abhikshanam (physical and mental debility)
3. Moha (mental disturbance specially in judgment)	3. Dhyayati (Worries always without apparent reason)
4. Pralap (delirium)	4. Vyathitaindriya (feels discomfort in the sense organs)
5. Mrityu (death)	5. Duskhaya (developed impaired or loss of complexion of body)

	6. Durmana (bad mentation or feeble mental stamina)
	7. Ruksha (dryness or roughness)
	8. Shama (skin becomes black)
	9. Kashya (Emaciation of the body)

CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

While explaining the pathology of Abhinyaasjwara, Acharya Susruta named it 'Hatojous' means in this disease due to different toxin produced in the body, oja decreases.^{xix}

Oja is the final and excellent essence of sapta dhatu. Similar to sapta dhatu it gets nourishment by ahara rasa. Some scholars explain it as updhatu. But as we know, oja does not nourish the body, so cannot be explained under dhatu. Dissimilar to upadhatu, it circulates all over the body through mahadhamnis so cannot be explained under upadhatu. Although it is explained as essence of sapta dhatu, but due to its prana dharak Karma, cannot be explained as dhatu^{xx}.

In Astangasangraha, it is said as mala of shukra dhatu. Though located in hrdaya, it pervades all over the body and controls the working of body. By its loss or destruction, the destruction of body (life) is sure to happen and by its presence, the body is sure to survive and different state (condition, activity, etc.) concerned with the body are brought properly.^{xxi}

Body is originally composed of dosas, dhatus and malas. As moola, i.e., root is the chief factor in stage of origin, sustenance and destruction of plants, in same way dosa, dhatu and mala for the body^{xxii}. Beyond this dosa, dhatu and mala, there is one separate entity due to which every tissue of the body remains integrity in functions and structure for strength and vitality of human body is called as ojas. The physical, mental and spiritual strength totally depends on ojas. Ojas gets formed first in the body of living beings.^{xxiii}

CONCLUSION

Oja is considered as vital essence of all the seven tissues which when sufficient in quantity there is health whereas its deficiency leads to diseases. The entire metabolic activities occurring in the human body throughout the lifetime are primarily dependent on Oja. Ojakshaya is seen in the etiopathogenesis of diabetes mellitus mainly in diabetes complications so the treatment should base on increasing the Oja or immunity along with controlling glucose level of the patients.

Prakrut oja plays an important role in maintaining healthy status of healthy individual, i.e., normal physiological function of the body and Ojasvikriti plays an important role in pathogenesis of disease. Vyadhikshamatva ultimately depends on the status of ojas. Ayurvedic Rasayan treatment corrects the agni and thereby produce best Dhatus as dhatwagnis are also at their best ability; hence ojas can be produced at their optimum level which corrects ojavikriti.

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