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## Review Article

### OJAS: THE VITAL NECTAR OF LIFE

Bagde A. B.<sup>1\*</sup>, Sawant R. S.<sup>2</sup>, Yanpallewar S. U.<sup>3</sup>, Nikumbh M. B.<sup>4</sup>, Dhimdhome R. S.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Sanskrit Samhita Siddhanta, Government Ayurved College, Osmanabad, M.S., India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Rasa-Shastra and Bhaishajya Kalpana, KGMP Ayurved College, Charni road, Mumbai, India

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Sanskrit Samhita Siddhanta, Vidarbha Ayurved College, Amaravati, M.S., India

<sup>4</sup>Professor, Department of Rachana Sharir, Government Ayurved College, Osmanabad, M.S., India

<sup>5</sup>Professor, Department of Sharir Kriya, Government Ayurved College, Osmanabad, M.S., India

	<b>ABSTRACT</b>
<p><b>*Correspondence</b></p> <p>Dr. Bagde A. B Assistant Professor, Department of Sanskrit Samhita Siddhanta, Government Ayurved College, Osmanabad, M.S., India</p> <p><b>DOI: 10.7897/2321-6328.02244</b></p> <p>Article Received on: 21/02/14 Accepted on: 18/03/14</p>	<p>According to Ayurveda, Ojas is an essence present in every dhatu (tissue) and considered as Sara of all the seven dhatus starting from Rasa to Shukra and responsible for the strength of the body. The purest substance in the universe and omnipresent in the human being. Ojas is responsible for consciousness, purity in thoughts, health, positivity in feelings in every situation, better immunity, longevity, intelligence and memory. According to Ayurveda, Ojas is one of the most important elements for maintaining and sustaining life. All human beings are well nourished by Ojas and its decrease leads to the cessation of life. Though Ojas is located in the Hridaya (heart), it pervades all over the body. 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. It is a bit difficult to define Ojas as per modern methodology. Various authors have mentioned the concept of Ojas in their own way which has made the topic of Ojas more controversial. Therefore this review article attempts to create certainty of Ojas understandable in a scientific way and its overall effects on the human body which will be helpful for scholars in the treatment of diseases and advising precautions.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Oja, Sarva dhatu Saar, Bala, Para Oja, Aparaj Oja</p>

### INTRODUCTION

According to the context of physical health and vitality, Ojas means "vigor".<sup>1</sup> In Ayurvedic literatures, Bala, Prakriti and Kapha these types of words are used as a synonym of Ojas.<sup>2</sup> Charak has mentioned that the kapha in its prakrita avastha (normal state) then it promotes strength, lubrication, virility, immunity, resistance and stability in the form of Ojas.<sup>3</sup> According to Sushruta, 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> This indicates that Ojas is established during the time of the fertilization of sperm and ovum. It means Ojas already exists in sperm and ovum in the Saar form. When sperm and ova combine with soul Garbha is formed. In Morula stage of fetus 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 8<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy, Sthira

Guna of Ojas is not established completely. Therefore Ojas is unstable in 8<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>6,7</sup> Ojas gets nourishment after digestion of food.<sup>8</sup> 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.

### Controversies about Ojas

Some scholars of Ayurveda say that Ojas is 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 can not be the eighth dhatu.

### Formation of Ojas

The best way to describe formation of Ojas is to understand how honey is made. Nearly ten to twenty thousand bees

collect the nectar or essence of thousands of fruits and flowers and stored 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.<sup>9</sup>

### Dwelling place of Ojas

Primary location of Ojas is the heart, from where it circulates to and circulates in the entire body. There are two places where Ojas prevails<sup>10,11</sup>.

1. Para Ojas - Hridaya Sthan (in the heart)
2. Aparaj 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)<sup>12</sup>

### Types of Ojas

According to Acharya Chakrapani two types of Ojas found in the body. They are as follows.

#### 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)<sup>14</sup>. It is highly pure (without any waste ingredient). This Para Ojas is responsible for continuation of life, therefore whenever, there is any decrease or loss in the volume of Para Ojas it would give rise to grave diseases and instantaneous death of that person. Therefore the protection of Para Ojas is the main aim of Yogic practices.

#### 2. Aparaj Ojas

Aparaj Ojas is also known as Shleshmika Ojas because its properties are similar to Shleshma (Kapha). Aparaj Ojas is present all over the body. According to Acharya Charak, the quantity of Ojas in a healthy individual is Ardhanjali<sup>15</sup> (one anjali represents the volume equal to that of two hands joined in the form of a cup and is applicable only for that individual. Anjali Pramana is the unit of measurement of body fluids employed in ancient Ayurvedic texts. The seat of Aparaj Ojas is the ten vessels connected with Hridaya. Any diminution in the volume of Aparaj Ojas will result in the absence of strength of the body and causes of various diseases.<sup>13</sup>

### 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)<sup>16</sup>

It is very difficult to comprehend the exact nature of Ojas. 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.<sup>17</sup>

### 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)<sup>18</sup>

### 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 as follows

- Balen (strength bestows)
- Sthira Upachita Mamsata (stability and growth of muscles)
- Sarva Cheshta Swapratighatah (ability to perform all activities without any hindrance)
- Swara Varna Prasado (clarity of voice and brightness of color or complexion)
- Karana Nama Aatma Karya Pratipatti (ability of external and internal sense organs to perform their own functions.)<sup>19</sup>

### Abnormalities of Ojas

Oja Visransa, Oja Vyapada and Oja Kshaya are the three stages of Oja Vikriti which may occur in various conditions and diseases ranging from physical and mental fatigue to acute and chronic mild and severe types of diseases. According to ancient Ayurvedic view these conditions may arise as a result of metabolic abnormalities leading to diminished production of Ojas They are as follows

- Oja Visransa
- Oja Vyapada
- Oja 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.<sup>20</sup>

### 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)<sup>21</sup>

### 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)<sup>22</sup>

#### 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).<sup>23</sup>

### Factor responsible for reduction of Ojas

Various causes which are responsible for the decreases of Ojas have been mentioned in the text of Ayurveda. They are as follows

- Ativyayama (excessive physical exercise)
- Anashana (fasting for long period)
- Chinta (constant worry)
- Consumption of foods which are dry (moistureless) in nature
- Pramitashana (consuming very less quantity of food)
- Vata-atapa seven (excessive exposure to heavy blows of wind and sun heat)
- Bhaya (fear)
- Shoka (grief and sorrow)
- Rukshapaan (drinking strong wines)
- Prajagar (keeping awake at nights)
- Excessive elimination of Kapha, Shonita (blood), Shukra (semen) and mala (urine and faces)
- Kala (due to old age)
- Abhighata (mental and physical trauma or injury to Marma (vital parts)
- Kopa (anger)
- Ativyavaya (excessive sex)<sup>24-26</sup>

### 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-

- Should be protected from activities, which causes unhappiness of the mind.

- Food and drugs having same qualities to Ojas should be used to enhance quality and quantity of Ojas.
- 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 the creation and flow of Ojas, we need a good diet 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 are sweet in taste, cold and lighter (easily digestible)
- Jeevaniya Gana Aushadhi (Life promoting medicine) like Maamsa Rasa (meat juice), milk and its preparations should be used.<sup>27,28</sup>

### Ojas Vriddhi (Increase of Ojas)

Ojas Vriddhi does not cause any disease; it provides satisfaction, strength, nutrition to whole body.<sup>29</sup>

- 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 Panch-mahabhuta, in the form of Vata, Pitta and Kapha at the physical level and Satwa, Raja and Tama at the mental level. The imbalance in these body humors is the basic cause of any type of disease manifestation. Till date, several objective parameters have been proposed to monitor the level of these basic humors but none of them is complete. In this exercise, now it is proposed to consider free radical theory of diseases as one of the objective parameters. To be more specific, Vata can be monitored in terms of membrane bound signal transduction, pitta as the process of phosphorylation and de-phosphorylation of different proteins (signaling moieties and enzymes) and kapha can be viewed as the degree of gene expression as protein synthesis. This can be correlated with the Ojas of the body or total body defense mechanism. Disease occurs when these transformative processes do not take place properly. There is no complete separation of the essence from the waste and the ingested food does not complete the transformative cycle. The quality of Ojas is affected and the bala of the body lowered. The ideal situation for occurrence of disease is thus created.<sup>30</sup> 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. In other words, it is the means to promote all transformative process in the body so as to culminate in the production of the refined essence

called Ojas. It is called Somatmaka. The nature of Ojas will differ from person to person depending on constitution, Agni, Satva and so on. So the level of bala that can be attained by each individual varies. 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.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> Ojas is the essence of dhatus, which gives strength to the body, improves immunity power and takes care of well being of the body. It is present all through the body like ghee exists in the milk or honey exists in the flower. It is Sarabhaga (ultimate essence) of all the Dhatus. If we desire perfect health, it's crucial to eliminate the ama stored in our body and focus on producing Ojas, which is the essential life energy. Ojas is considered as the most refined result of digestion metabolism, absorption and assimilation. Ojas bring clarity to the mind and balancing the emotions. This is our best safeguard against mental and physical disease. Our physical, mental and spiritual strength is totally dependent on Ojas. 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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