

OJAS: A CONCEPT UNIQUE TO AYURVEDA**Dr. Manjula^{*1}, Dr. Anubha Yadav², Dr. Ritisha³ and Dr. Mita Kotecha⁴**¹PG Scholar, Dept. of Dravyaguna, NIA, Jaipur.²PG Scholar, Dept. of Ras Shastra & Bhaishajya Kalpana, AIIA, Delhi.³PG Scholar, Dept. of Rog Nidana, NIA, Jaipur.⁴Prof. & HOD, Dept. of Dravyaguna, NIA, Jaipur.**ABSTRACT**

Ayurveda is a science of life with many concepts of its own. One such concept unique to *Ayurveda* is *Ojas*, which is the vital force helping in sustenance of the body and rendering the body to be capable of fighting with the diseases. It is the cause and *ashraya* of *Bala* which is the only one being capable of defying *Dosha*. *Acharya Sushruta* directs the physician to always try to maintain the *Bala* of the patient which checks the progress of disease if restored. In the present day scenario, stamina of the young generation is very less most of them having spectacles and various other health issues. Hence, an attempt has been

made to understand the entity called *ojas* and suggest treatment for *ojakshaya* so that the principles may be utilized to enhance *oja* in the body. The information may be utilised to find out various *ojavardhaka dravya* and make various formulations out of them.

KEYWORDS: *Ojas, Bala, Ayurveda, Ojakshaya.***INTRODUCTION**

Ojas is a novel concept put forward by *Ayurveda* physicians. It is primarily quoted in *atharvaveda*, where *agni* which is worshipped for *bala, ayu* and *arogya*; is termed as *ojas*.^[1]

It is analogized with sun at some places which is believed to be functioning in threefold manner throughout universe. Its presence is accepted in whole body and is responsible for health & diseased state. Hence, according to *veda*, *ojas* refers to things indicative of strength and vigour in the body and the entities responsible for good health, prevention and cure of diseases.^[2,3,4]

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In *purana*, *ojas* was well established and its both quantitative & qualitative assessment were mentioned. Its fluid nature and *bala* as its innate quality also seem to be known during this period.

In *samhita* period, *ojas* is described thoroughly with its physical characters, quality, functions, causes & symptoms of diseased state and its significance in health, disease, prognosis & treatment.

Etymology of the word *Oja*: Hence, the word *Ojas* is made up of Sanskrit *dhatu* 'ubja' along with the help of *asun pratyaya* which is used only when it is used for the referring to *bala*. 'Ubja' *dhatu* belongs to 'udadi' group of *dhatu* which mean 'arjawa (*abja arjave*)' which means to keep others in their proper place & functional state.^[5,6]

As per *siddhantakaumudi*, the term *ojas* is made up of 'urja' *dhatu* which means to confer power & vitality 'urja bala pranayoho'.

Hence, it is the substantial entity of the body responsible for the integrity of structure & function of all the tissues and for strength & vitality of human body.^[7]

Definition: It is the essence of *Saptadhatu* and due to oneness of *Karya Karana*, it is also known as *Sharira Bala*.^[8,9,10]

Different interpretations of *Ojas*

1. *Sarvadhatusara rupa*

Ashtabindu parimita ojas which is the essence of all *dhatu*.

2. *Rasa Dhatu rupa*^[11]

- *Acharya Caraka*^[12] & *Ashtangasangraha*^[10] has defined *ojas* as *sharira rasa sneha*. *Cakrapani* interpreted *sharira rasa sneha* as *sara* of *sharira sara*. It may be taken as *sara* of *sharira rasa* & hence of all *sharira dhatu* because the word *rasa* & *sneha* both may be taken as *sara*.^[13]

- *Vipaka kriya* of *Agni* on *Mahabhuta Ansha* results in production of *Ojas* in *Yakshma rogi*. Actually, here *Rasa* is being produced which is basis of life for *Yakshma rogi*. It may be interpreted that *Rasa* is produced in less quantity due to weakness of *Pachakagni* which results in weakness of other *Dhatu* which is further responsible for less production of

Dhatusararupa Oja. This is expressed as less *Ojas* is being produced due to weakness of *Agni*.^[14]

- *Vagbhata* has clearly stated that *Dashamoola Sira* originating from *Hridaya* carry *Rasatmaka Ojas*. It doesn't mean that *Rasa* is *Ojas*, instead it depicts that *Ojovaha Sira* carry *Rasayukta Ojas*. In fact, *Rasavaha*, *Raktavaha* and *Ojovaha Sira* are all same.

- *Hemadri* also took *rasa* as *ojas*.^[15]

3. *Rakta roopa*

- *Dalhana* has taken *Rakta* as *Ojas* at many places.^[16]

- *Hemadri* also took *rakta* as *ojas*.^[17]

- As per modern science, parts of *Rakta* providing immunity to the body may be considered here.

4. *Prakrita Kapha roopa*

Caraka has described *prakrita sleshma* as *ojas*.^[18] He has also used the term *sleshmika kshaya* for *ojokshaya*.

Ojas has been accepted in *Kaphavarga*, *Kapha Svaroopta* and *Utkrishta Bala roopa*. Each one has different description. Even then *Ojas* is taken as *Prakrita Kapha*. In this context, measurement of *Vishuddha Sleshma* is 6 *anjali* and *Shlaishmika (Apara) Oja* is ½ *Anjali* which points at their discreteness and inclusion of *Ojas* in *Sleshma Varga* with special form and actions. Also, while *Prakrita sleshma* is synonymous to *Bala* while *Ojas* itself is the cause of *Bala*. In spite of having distinct existence from *Vishuddha Sleshma*, its properties are similar to *Sleshma* when it is in physiological form^[19] as it is produced from *Sleshmavargiya Sukra*. Hence, may be called as *Prakrita Kapha*.

5. *Sariroshma roopa*^[11]

Sariroshma is produced with the help of *Draksha sharkara* which is also taken as *Ojas*.

6. *Draksha sarkara roopa*

Apara Oja may be taken as *Draksha sarkara*. Best example being pathogenesis of *Madhumeha* by *Caraka* which quotes that when *Vayu* takes *Ojas* to *Basti*, then *Kricchra vyadhi Madhumeha* is produced.^[20]

As per modern science, it is clear that *Draksha sarkara* is excreted through *Mootra* in *Madhumeha*. It is being stored in liver and muscles, released at the time of requirement for producing action of various *Dhatu*. Hence, it may be taken as *Ojas*.

7. *Sukra roopa*

- As per *Dalhana*, the essence of all *Dhatu* '*Ojas*' is present in whole body just like presence of *Sukra* in whole body and presence of *Ghrita* in milk.^[11] *Ojas* is produced from *Sukra* only. Hence *Ojas* may be considered as *Sukra*.
- *Hemadri* also took *sukra* as *ojas*.^[15,17]

8. *Sukrasara, Sukramala, Sukropadhatu, Garbhasya adisara roopa*

Ojas is the *Sara* of all *Dhatu* and the last of all *Dhatu*- *Sukra* is also the most potent and superior one whose *Sara* is being quoted as *Ojas* by *Vagbhata*. He further explained the absence of *Mala* in *Sukra Dhatu* as it is very pure.^[21]

Ashtanga Hridaya put forward the concept of *Ojas* as *Sukramala*.^[22] He further indicated that *Snehadhikya, Gaurava* and *Utkrishṭata* of *Rasadi Dhatu* increases successively.^[23]

Dalhana clarified that *sukra* does not possess *Mala*. It consists of *Sarabhaga* only which is *Ojas*.^[24]

Acharya Sarangadhara is the only one to take it as *upadhatu* of *Sukra Dhatu*.^[25]

Ojas has also been expounded as *garbhasya adisara* i.e. primordial substance of intrauterine life.^[7,10] In fact, its existence is even before fertilization as *sara* of sperms & ovum, which is essential for fertilization to occur. Fertilization leads to production of *garbha* i.e. zygote & *ojas*, the latter being called as *garbharasadrāsaha* which means *sara* of the first formed *rasa dhatu* of *garbha*.^[26]

Concluding, *Ojas* is all *Sara Roopa, Mala Roopa & Upadhatu Roopa* as only *Ojas* is produced during analysis of *sukra* by *sukradhatvagnivyapara*. Any of the term is mentioned according to the context for eg. in *garbhotpatti prakarana*, where fertilization results in the production of *ojas* along with *garbha*, it is termed as *sukramala* & *garbha* is termed as *sara*. *Hemadri* elaborates that these terms are relative since *ojas* is *mala* of *sukra* in comparison of *garbha* but *sara* in comparison to *rasadi dhatu*. Hence, the *ojas* thus formed is said to be *garbhasyadisara*.

Synonyms

It has been used in the following context:-

1. *Dipti, Bala, Prakasha*.^[27]
2. *Dipti, Avashtambhe, Pranabale, Samarthye, Sastradikaushale, Patave (Vachaspatyam)*
3. Body strength, vigour, energy, ability, power, etc.^[28]
4. *Sleshma*^[8]

Bala is mentioned in its synonyms in *samhita* also.^[18,8]

Few other synonyms include *Dhatusara, Poshaka Dhatusara, Tejus, Saha*.^[29]

Various synonyms depict its physical properties, chemical properties, functions, production or distribution mechanisms.

Production of Oja

- It is produced at very first amongst living beings^[30] by which *sahaja bala* is initiated. When *shukra* and *shonita* fuses during fertilization, *sukradhatu* (both *sukra* and *sonita*) *paka* results in the formation of *sara* and *mala*^[31] as per the rule of *rasadi dhatvagnivyapara*. The *ojas* hence formed, will do *avashtambha* & sustain the life of *garbha*. Both of them possess the *sara* of all *dhatu* rendering them viability as both produced from sperm & ovum through conception. *Ahara rasa* derived from mother's body possessing the qualities similar to that of *ojas*.^[31] is responsible for further nourishment of *ojas* & the growing embryo. Hence, the *ojas* increases to *ardhanjali*.^[1] After the development of heart in the subsequent period of intrauterine life, *ojas* enters the heart & related vessels through which it is circulated through the whole body of foetus supporting all the tissues of the foetus.^[31] Hence, existence of *ojas* occurs in all the phases of intrauterine life.^[7]
- While describing its production process, *Caraka* said that *Guna* present in the body collect *Ojas* from similar *guna* just like honey bees collect honey from fruits and flowers.^[33]

Poshana (Nourishment): *Acharya Caraka* illuminates that all the seven *dhatu* and *ojas* are nourished through *Ahara rasa*.^[34] *Sushruta* also accepts the same concept stating that *ahara* is responsible for all life as well as *bala, varna* & *ojas*.^[35] Hence, *ojas* is produced through food substances but here, *agni* (both *jaṭharagni* & *dhatvagni*) has a major role too as although

all the nutritive factors of *dhatu*, *ojas*, *bala*, *varna* are present in the food substances but it requires proper functioning of *agni* for its conversion into specific metabolise.^[34]

Srotas which are the internal transport system of the body also play a significant role by transporting the precursors of the body elements i.e. nutrient fractions to the places where they go through *agnivyapara* and by transporting them further to the site of *sthayi dhatu* where are transformed into final products.^[36,37]

Apart from these, *aharaparinamakara bhava* viz. *vayu*, *kleda*, *ushma*, etc may also be considered among the responsible factors.^[37]

Guna of the *ahara dravya* responsible for the formation of *ojas* are similar to the *ahara dravya* responsible for formation of *kapha dosha* and *dhatu* like *rasa*, *mansa*, *meda*, *majja* and *sukra* which are being *guru*, *bahala*, *snigdha*, *picchila*, *manda*, *sthira*, *sheeta*, *slakshna* and *sthoala*. Among six *rasa*, *madhura rasa* facilitates *ojas* while among five *mahabhuta*, *prthvi* & *jala mahabhoota* facilitate *ojas*. *Caraka* also points at *dravya* with *hridya* & *strotoprasadakara* property being favorable to *ojas*.^[38,39]

Types of *ojas*: *Caraka* has used the term *Para* or *Pradhana* only for *ojas*, but *Cakrapani* classified the *Ojas* into two types in his commentary:-

1. *Para ojas (Pradhana)*: One which dwells in the heart and is predominantly white, yellowish & reddish in colour is *para ojas* which originates first and after which the body of an organism develops. It is like *ghee*, sweet in taste like *madhu* and has the smell of *laja* at the time of origin. Slight depletion of *para ojas* causes death.^[40,41]
2. *Apara ojas (Apradhana)*: It is also known as *Sleshmika ojas*. The word 'sleshma' is derived from "slish alingane" *dhatu* which means to hold & keep together. Here, the prefix 'Sleshmika' before *ojas* signifies its role in maintaining the integrity of all *dosha*, *dhatu*, *mala*, *manas* and *atma* in living beings.

***Sthana* (~ Seat):** *Hridaya* on which *Ayu* depends is also the seat of *Para ojas*. Clinicians call it as *Mahat* as it shelters *Ojas* & *Artha* as it shelters *Cetana*. *Ojas* enters into heart & gets mixed with *rasa*.^[42] Ten *Dhamanee* originating from *hridaya* are known as *Mahamoola* or *Ojovaha* through which *oja* circulates in body along with *rasa*.^[43]

All ancient scholars have accepted every organ of the body as the seat of *ojas*.^[44,45,46]

Acharya Bhela has described twelve main seats of *ojas* in the body viz. *rasa, rakta, mansa, meda, asthi, majja, sukra, sveda, pitta, sleshma, mootra* and *pureesha*.

Svaroop (~form): Study of *svaroop* of *ojas* is essential for appropriate comprehension of its varied aspects.

Nature (State in which it exists) : It is liquid in nature as it has been enumerated along with other body fluids & measured in *anjali pramana*.^[32]

Colour: *Rakta* and *Ishat Peetavarneeya Sveta Padartha, Sarpivarna – Caraka*.^[30]

Sukla varna – Sushruta^[47]

Atishveta – Dalhana^[48]

Ishat lohita peetakam – Vagbhata^[49]

Shyava – Kashyapa^[50]

Odour: Only *Caraka* mentioned it as *lajagandhi*.^[30]

Taste: Only *Caraka* mentioned it as *Madhura rasa*.^[51] In another context, he mentioned it as *madhuras* with slight *kashayatva*.^[30]

Consistency: *Guru, Seeta, Mridu, Slakshna, Bahala, Sthira, Prasanna, Picchila, Snigdha*.^[52]

Guna (~ Properties)

Ten pairs (total twenty) of *shareera guna* are mentioned, among which one out of each pair shows anabolic or anticatabolic effect on the body. *Ojas* has the following *guna* through which it executes its functions- *Somatmaka, Guru, Snigdha, Sheeta, Sthira, Slakshna, Sara, Prasanna, Picchila, bahala, Vivikta, Madhura, Mridu, Mritsna* and *Uttama Pranayatana*. It resides in every part of body and the body is destroyed in its absence.^[40,51,47,49]

Karma (~ Action)

Ojas has been mentioned as “*Pranayatanam uttamam*”.^[47] Living beings live as they are content and fulfilled with *Oja*. Its absence results in absence of life. Being originated from *Garbharasa*, it is *Adisara* of *Garbha*. It preserves and protects life by entering and residing in heart before being circulated in the body. Its destruction leads to destruction of life. Hence, *Prana* (~vitality) remains in the *Oja* and provides *Sthirata* (~ Stability) to the body^[7,53,9] It is responsible for *bala* of the body. It provides protection to the body against diseases, decay & degeneration and also bestows natural resistance (*vyadhikshamatva*) against diseases.^[54] It may also be said to be responsible for *Brimhana* on the basis of the concept put forward by

Acharya Kashyap that the body increases in size only when *ojas* in the body increases & vice versa.^[50]

It has a major role in all three stages of life i.e. *utpatti*, *sthiti* & *pralaya*.^[55]

A. In *Utpatti*

1. In fertilization: *Ojas* exists in the sperm and ovum in the form of their *sara* or essence, in the absence of which fertilization cannot take place.^[56,57]
2. In growth & development of *garbha*: After fertilization, *sara* of *sukra* and *sonita* transforms into a new entity known as *garbharasadrasaha* which is the only source of nutrition of *garbha* for its growth & development.^[9]
3. In viability or non- viability of foetus: *Ojas* circulates between mother and foetus during the eighth month of pregnancy.^[58] The foetus does not survive, if gets delivered when *ojas* is in maternal body.^[59,60]

B. In *Sthiti*

1. In maintaining health: *Dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala* are the fundamental units of the body which sustain the body in its normal state but they can't do so in the absence of *ojas* even if they are present in their physiological state of equilibrium.^[56]
2. In performing actions: All the activities of the body viz. *kayika*, *vachika*, *manasika* can be executed properly in the presence of *ojas* only.^[16]
3. In preventing & fighting against *vyadhi*: The term *ojas* represents the status of *bala* due to the cause & effect relation between the two.^[61,62] *Vyadhi pratikara Sakti* depends upon the *bala*. Hence, it is not only accountable for *vyadhi utpada pratibandhakara* but also for *vyadhibalavirodhitva*.
4. Attaining good health: Good/ Positive health means better than the normal health and is identified by *sthiropachita mansata*, *svara varna prasadana*, *atibalatvam*, *manda jara*, *manda vikara*, *smriti medha buddhi*, *kleshasaha*, etc.^[63]

Measurement

In *Ayurveda*, body fluids are measured in *anjali pramana*. One *anjali* is equivalent to volume of the cavity formed by hollowing one's both palms together and befits that individual only.

Slaishmika/ Apara Ojas: Ardhanjali^[32]

Hridayashrita Para Ojas: Ashta Bindu^[64]

Acharya Caraka further clarifies that the *pramana* mentioned here is *param pramana* (maximum) & the *pramana* varies with the fluctuations in the body fluid according to the constitution of the body.

Acharya Gangadhara points at the oneness of *ashta Bindu* and *ardhanjali* as *bindu* implies *karsa* and eight *karsa* are equivalent to *ardhanjali*.

Acharya Vagbhata quoted the quantity of *ojas* as one *prasrita*^[65] which also means the cavity formed by hollowing one's own palm and is not the two *pala* as in *Mana Prakarana*.

Arunadatta states that *ojas* is present in all the cells of the body and its six drops are located in *hridaya*.^[66]

Para Ojas is the basis of life. Its destruction leads to destruction of life. Decrease in *Apara Ojas* produces symptoms of *Ojakshaya* in the body.

Factors for *Ojakshaya*^[67,68,69,70]

1. *Abhighata* - Injury
2. *Vyayama, Shrama* – Excessive physical work than the stamina of individual.
3. *Anashana* – Not taking any food.
4. *Chinta, Dhyana* – Regular anxiety or worry.
5. *Krodha* - Anger
6. *Rookshalpa pramitashanam* – Intake of small quantity of food, dry food.
7. *Vatatapa* – Sitting in dry air and in extensive sunlight.
8. *Bhayam* – Excessive fear.
9. *Shokam* – Excessive sadness.
10. *Rookshapanam* – Prolonged intake of alcohol, which causes dryness.
11. *Prajagaraha* – Regular awakening at night.
12. *Kshudha* - Hunger
13. *Kapha shonita sukraṇama malanama atipravartana* – Excessive excretion of *Kapha, Rakta, Sukra* and other *Mala*.
14. *Kshaya* - Wasting
15. *Kala* – Different time factors like *Ādānakāla, Aparāhna, old age*.
16. *Bhootopaghata* – Recurrent infections
17. Factors producing mental and psychological stress.

Symptoms of *Ojakshaya*

The symptoms of *Ojakshaya* in general are^[71]:-

1. *Bibheti*
2. *Durbala*
3. *Abheekshanam dhyayati*
4. *Vyathitendriya*
5. *Dushchayo*
6. *Durmana*
7. *Rookshaha*
8. *Kshamashchaiva*

There are three types of abnormalities of *ojas*:^[73]

1. *Visransa* – Characterized by *Sandhivishlesha* (dislocation of joints), *Gatranam sadanam* (body ache), *Dosha cyavanam* (displacement of *dosha* from their sites), *Kriya sannirodhashcha* (obstruction in execution of physical & mental functions).
2. *Vyapada* - Characterized by *Stabdhatagurugatrata* (heaviness & loss of functions of the body), *Vatashopha* (*Vatika* oedema), *Varnabheda* (Discoloration of the body), *Glani* (Malaise), *Tandra* (drowsiness), *Nidra* (excessive sleep).
3. *Kshaya* - Characterized by *Moorccha* (fainting), *Mansakshaya* (emaciation of muscles), *Moha* (confusion), *Pralapa* (delirium), *Maranam* (death)

Treatment of *Ojakshaya*

1. *Hridya*, *Aujasya* and *Strotoprasadaka ahara vihara* should be taken.^[73]
2. The individual should try to have *prashama* and *gyana*.^[73]
3. *Visransa* and *Vyapada avastha* should be treated by increasing the *bala* of *rogi* with *vishesha kriya* which should not work against *bala*, *dosha* and *agni* of *sharira*.^[72]
4. Individual presenting with *moodhasngya avastha* of *ojakshaya* should not be treated.^[72]
5. *Jivaniya aushadha* and *ksheera* should be used.^[74]

CONCLUSION

Ojas has not been enumerated among *Dhatu* and *Upadhatu*. It is not only the essence of all *Dhatu* and better than all *Upadhatu*, but it is also the best in properties and actions.

All *dhatu* are nourished through *Ahara rasa*. Fractions of every *dhatu* is present in subtle form in *Ahara rasa* which are extracted and transformed into *Dhatu* through *Dhatvagni*. *Utkrishtatama Teja* of these *Dhatu* is termed as *Ojas*.

Hence, there may be two kind of beliefs about *Ojas*:-

1. Best fraction of *Ahara rasa* which is essentially absorbed by all *Dhatu* is *Ojas*. This belief validates the presence of *Ojas* in *Ahara rasa*.
2. *Ojas* fraction from *Ahara rasa* exists in special form in every *Dhatu* and works accordingly viz. its fraction staying in *Rakta* helps in conducting special actions through *Rakta*. It validates the *Teja* absorbed from *Ahara rasa* and expressed in the transformed *Dhatu* as *Vishesha Ojas*.

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