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CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF OJAS AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN VYADHIKSHAMATVA

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ABSTRACT:

Ojas is considered to be the Saara (essence) of all Dhatu which is responsible for the strength, vigor, and vitality of an individual. Any deviation or drop in the normal quantity and quality of Ojas leads to serious health complications and death. It is responsible for providing nutrition and enhancing the immune strength of the body. The concept of Ojas can be correlated to immune system of the body. The present literary work attempts to study the concept of Ojas critically and throw light on its significance in Vyadhikshamatva. The classic texts of Ayurveda and their commentaries, various references scattered through them were enlisted and careful consideration was done over it. Scholarly articles, books etc. were also referred wherever needed. Ojas is present in two forms as Para Ojas and Aparaj Ojas. These factors are responsible for immunity. Deficient and/or vitiated Ojas is an important factor in the Samprapti (pathogenesis) of many diseases like Rajayakshma, Abhinyasa Jwara, Sannipata Jwara, Madhumeha, etc. Oja Vyapat, Oja Visramsas and Oja Kshaya can be considered the three types of immune disorders. Thus, concept of Ojas given in major texts of Ayurveda can be utilized in Vyadhi-Pratibandha as well as Vyadhi-Chikitsa.

Keywords: *Ojas, Vyadhikshamatva, immunity.*

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Introduction:

Trividha Dosha, i. e. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha Dosha*; *Sapta-Dhatu*, i. e. *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja* and *Shukra Dhatu* and *Traya Mala*, i. e. *Mootra*, *Purisha* and *Sweda* are the basic pillars of human body.¹ The word '*Dhatu*' is derived from the word root "*Dha*" by adding suffix "*Tun*". The derivation of the word meaning that which sustains and nourishes.²

Dhatu (seven body components) develop sequentially in body and nourish each other i.e.; *Rasa Dhatu* is very important for the formation of *Rakta Dhatu* which further nourishes *Mamsa Dhatu* and so on.³ *Sapta-Dhatu* perform the functions of *Preenana* (nourishment), *Jeevana* (vitality), *Lepana* (covering body mass), *Snehana* (oleation), *Dharana* (holding body frame), *Poorana* (filling up bones) and *Garbhotpadana* (reproduction) respectively.⁴

Ojas is considered to be the essence of all *Sapta Dhatu*. Ayurved recognizes *Ojas* as the active and potent principle of the body that is responsible for the strength, vigor, and vitality of an individual. The prime function of *Ojas* is to maintain vitality and sustaining the integrity of life. Any deviation or drop in the normal quantity and quality of *Ojas* leads to serious health complications and death. It is responsible for providing nutrition and enhancing the immune strength of the body.

The detailed description of '*Vyadhikshamatva*' (immunity) is given in *Charaka Samhita* & its Commentary by *Chakrapanidatta*. The *Vyadhikshamatva* (immunity) is defined as both

attenuation of the manifested diseases and prevention of the diseases which have not got manifested. The concept of *Ojas* can be correlated to immune system of the body. The present literary work attempts to study the concept of *Ojas* critically and throw light on its significance in *Vyadhikshamatva*, i.e. immune system.

Methods:

The classic texts of Ayurveda and their commentaries were reviewed as primary source of information. Various references scattered through them were enlisted and careful deliberation was done over it. Scholarly articles, books etc. were also referred wherever needed.

Results:

Ojas is the essence of all *Sapta Dhatu*. Ayurveda recognizes *Ojas* as the active and potent principle of the body that is responsible for the strength, vigour, and vitality of an individual. According to Acharya Sushruta and Acharya Vagbhat, *Ojas* is the purest, finest essence formed from all seven *Dhatu*.⁶ According to Acharya Charaka, the *Shleshma* (*Kapha Dosha*) in a normal state is considered as *Ojas*.⁷

The *Shuddha* (clear) and *Ishat Rakta Sapeetaka* (slightly red-yellowish substance) situated in the *Hridaya* (heart) is known as *Ojas*. Its *Nasha* (destruction) leads to *Vinasha* (death).⁸ *Ojas* is the very first substance created in *Sharira* (the body) of all *Shariri* (living beings). Its *Varna* (colour) resembles that of *Sarpi* (ghee), *Rasa* (tastes) like

Madhu (honey) and *Gandha* (smells) like *Laja* (roasted paddy). As *Madhu* (honey) is collected by *Bhramara* (bees) from various *Phala – Pushpa* (fruits and flowers), similarly *Ojas* is collected by the inherent vital qualities of a man from the various physiological processes that take place in the body.⁹

Arising from the *Hridaya* (heart) are the *Dasha Mahamoola Dhamani* (ten great vessels) that carry *Ojas*, pulsating in this body and permeating thoroughly. *Ojas* is located within the heart that keeps all the beings content and alive. There will be no life without *Ojas*. It is *Garbhasya Sara* (the essence in the fertilization) and *Garbharasat Rasa* (the essence of *Rasa Dhatu* in the embryo). It enters the heart during the formation of heart, and its deficiency or loss leads to degeneration of the body. It is the seat of *Sharira Rasa Sneha* (the essence of unctuous body fluids) and *Prana* (vital life forces). Thus, the *Ojas* is absolutely important since it results in *Maha-Phala* (multiple benefits).¹⁰

Mahat / Hrudaya (the heart), *Mahamoola* (the great vessels), and the *Ojas* need to be *Parirakshata* (protected and preserved). To achieve this, one has to *Pariharya* (avoid) causes of *Manasa Dukha-Hetava* (mental suffering) *Visheshena* (especially). Diet, drugs, and behaviour that are beneficial for the heart, for the formation of *Ojas* and for keeping the vessels clear (or unblocked) should be adopted, along with the pursuit of mental peace and wisdom.¹¹

Ojas is present in two forms: *Para Ojas* and *Apara Ojas*. *Para Ojas* is the most important component responsible for the vitality of life. Its quantity in the body is measured as *Ashta Bindu* (eight drops). It is located in the heart. It is generally stable in the body in an equilibrium state. Destruction of this component can cause death. In gestational life, it is responsible for the vitality of the foetus. It becomes unstable in the 8th month of gestation leading to uncertainty of labour. Therefore, its stability is of utmost importance for full-term birth.¹²

Apara Ojas is formed during the metabolism of each *Dhatu*. Its quantity in the body is measured as *Ardhanjali* (half *Anjali* -personified measurement unit).¹³ It is present in all body components and manifests in the form of the *Saara* (essence of *Dhatu*). This can be observed as factors responsible for immunity.

The prime and most important function of *Ojas* is to maintain vitality and sustaining the integrity of life. Any deviation or depreciation in the normal quantity and quality of *Ojas* leads to serious health complications and death. It is responsible for providing nutrition and enhancing the immune strength of the body. Due to the presence of normal *Ojas*, all external and internal senses including the mind do their functions properly.¹⁴ Thus, *Oja* is responsible for sensory functions and perception of knowledge.

According to Acharya Charaka, therapeutics is of two types – *Swasthasya Urjaskaram* and *Rogasya Artanut* - the one which can promote strength

(and immunity) and the other that alleviates disorders in ailing. The former one goes for positive health or for *Swasthya - Rakshana* i.e. to maintain the physical and mental well - being of an individual. Restoration of health depends on *Bala* (strength) of an individual which includes preventive measures against diseases and can be compared with concept of 'Vyadhikshamatva'. 'Vyadhikshamatva' means preventive response of subject to the disease which can be correlated with the concept of immunity.¹⁵

One can find the detailed description of 'Vyadhikshamatva' (immunity) in *Charaka Samhita* & its Commentary by *Chakrapanidatta*. He vividly defines the *Vyadhikshamatva* (immunity) as both attenuation of the manifested diseases as well as prevention of the diseases which have not got manifested.

- **Vyadhibala-Virodhitva** means that type of resistance which minimizes the force or severity of disease after the disease has already been produced.
- **Vyadhyutpad-Pratibandhakatva** means that type of immunity which prevents the manifestation of disease.

Acharya Chakrapani's definition is generally applicable to infectious as well as non - infectious diseases. It is definitely stated that all bodies do not have the same power of resistance against all diseases. Individuals with neither obese nor thin bodies, well built & developed *Mansa, Shonita & Asthi Dhatus*, taking food of optimum quality &

quantity, strong body & mind are *Vyadhikshama* i.e. they are able to resist any kind of disease & vice - versa.¹⁶

The term *Bala* is used as synonyms of *Ojas*, an essence of all *Dhatus*. The *Bala* signifies the physical, mental strength of body resistance. *Bala* has been classified into three types as - *Sahaja Bala, Kalaja Bala* and *Yuktikruta Bala*. *Sahaja Bala* is both mental and physical strength present naturally by birth. *Kalaja Bala* is strength due to favorable conditions like youth, season and *Yuktikruta Bala* is strength acquired by the intake of diet such as flesh, ghee etc and by proper exercise.¹⁷

According to Ayurveda, combination of *Nidana* (etiological factors), *Dosha* and *Dushya* (*Dhatu, Mala* and *Srotas*) is responsible for the manifestation of a disease. Although, these three factors are present, the occurrence or non-occurrence of a disease depends on another factor called as *Vikara-Vighata-Bhava*. Specific features of *Nidana, Dosha* and *Dushya* determine the bodily immunity or susceptibility to the manifestation of a disease.¹⁸

Immunity or Natural immune response is a physiological reaction executed by the body in order to prevent the disease process or lessen the intensity of disease. The word 'Immunity' means resistance to a disease because of the formation of humeral antibodies or the development of cellular immunity or both. *Rasayana* therapy can be correlated with immunomodulators. *Rasayana* drugs are rich in antioxidants and are

good hepatoprotective, nephroprotective, and immunomodulating agents. *Rasayana* enhances the 'Prohost Resistance' against diseases. *Rasayana Dravyas* achieve *Vyadhi-Nashana* functions by acting at various levels, i.e. *Rasadhatu*, *Agni* & *Srotas*. The proper management of *Aushadha* (medicine) along with wholesome diet and regime is useful to enhance the '*Vyadhikshamatva*' of an individual. Along with *Sharira Bhava*, *Manasa Bhava*, *Sattva* is also responsible for boosting immune system of an individual with the application of *Aachara Rasayana*.¹⁹

While explaining the pathology of *Abhinyasa Jwara*, Acharya Susruta named it '*Hataujasa*' means in this disease due to different toxin produced in the body, *Ojas* decreases.²⁰ Further, while explaining *Sannipata Jwara*, Acharya Sushruta explained a condition, where due to increase in *Vata* and *Pitta Dosha*, *Ojas* is displaced from its normal place, as a result symptoms of *Visramsavastha* occurs. While explaining the pathology of *Madhumeha*, Acharya Charaka said, due to obstruction by *Dosha* and due to *Ruksha Guna* of *Vayu*, *Ojas* flows out of the body through *Mutramarga* and *Madhumeha Vyadhi* gets manifested.²¹ According to Acharya Charaka, *Prakupita Dosha* and *Ksheena Dhatu* produce loss of strength, complexion, and unctuousness. As a result *Dhatu Saar (Ojas)* gets depleted.²²

Ojakshaya occur in the *Samprapti* of different diseases. So, for a physician it is mandatory to have the knowledge of *Oja-Vyavasthapan*

treatment. By using *Ojovyavasthapanaka Dravya* like *Jeevaneeya Gana Dravya* in the healthy stage of body helps in maintaining normal quantity of *Ojas* in body and when *Ojas* is present in its normal quantity, then all the functions of *Ojas* occur appropriately without any disease.

Discussion

Ojas and *Vyadhikshamatva* are the fundamental principles responsible for strength, vigour, vitality, maintenance of health and resistance against diseases. The above descriptions of *Ojas* and *Vyadhikshamatva* highlight their association and interdependence. Qualitative *Ojas* initiates contentment and nourishment of the body and improves strength in terms of *Vyadhikshamatva*. They can be correlated with the conventional concept of immunity. Reduced or impaired *Vyadhikshamatva* also leads to various diseases and also increases their severity. As described in Ayurved scriptures, deficient and/or vitiated *Ojas* is an important factor in the *Samprapti* (pathogenesis) of many diseases like *Rajayakshma*, *Abhinyasa Jwara*, *Sannipata Jvar*, *Madhumeha*, etc. *Oja Vyapat*, *Oja Visramsa* and *Oja Kshaya* can be considered the three types of immune disorders.^{23, 24} *Oja Vyapat*, *Oja Visramsa* and *Oja Kshaya* have been correlated to immune-aberrations and allergies, a state of dislodged immunity and autoimmune disorders, and a state of immunodeficiency respectively.

Conclusion: Thus, concept of *Ojas* given in major texts of Ayurveda can be utilized in *Vyadhi-Pratibandha* as well as *Vyadhi-Chikitsa*.

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