



Oja in Ayurveda - Literature review

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Abstract- The body's resistance and immunity are primarily governed by Ojas, an essential life element that pervades the entire body (Sarva Sharirvyapi) and represents vitality, strength, and well-being. Ojas is considered the essence of all Dhatus (body tissues) and plays a vital role in maintaining the body's protection and resilience. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe Ojas in detail—its types, location, quantity, functions, and causes of derangement. It is associated with consciousness, purity of thought, emotional stability, robust immunity, longevity, intelligence, and memory. According to Ayurveda, Ojas is one of the most crucial elements for sustaining life, as its depletion results in the end of existence. Though primarily located in the Hridaya (heart), Ojas pervades the entire body, regulating all physiological and psychological functions. Qualitative Ojas promotes nourishment and contentment, and enhances physical, mental, and immunological strength. Despite detailed descriptions in Ayurvedic literature, defining Ojas in the context of modern medical science remains complex and challenging.

Key-words: Bala, Immunity, Oja, Vyadhikshamatva

Introduction

Oja is one of the main factors responsible for a person's immunity, according to Ayurveda. Thus, studying Oja and Ojovaha srotasa is an urgent need. An attempt is made to study all aspects of Oja, such as its formation, primary seat, types, perception of Oja according to various acharyas, symptoms of its elevation and depletion and how to assess it practically in the patient, ways to increase Oja in order to boost immunity, and so on. Oja is a Sanskrit word that translates to "vigor" or "essence of vitality." Oja is made in the same way that ghee is made from milk. Oja is a valuable end product that has been refined through many natural transformations.

A person with exceptional Oja is rarely ill. Oja is thought to be the essence of the Kapha dosha. An effort has been made in this study to comprehensively discuss various aspects of Ojas, including its formation, physical characteristics, inherent properties, and the physiological

and pathological effects observed when its quantity either increases or decreases within the body..

Acharya Chakrapani, the eminent commentator of the Charaka Samhita, first defined Vyadhi kshamatva in terms of Vyadhi bala virodhitva- capacity of the body to fight against manifested diseases (natural immunity) and Vyadhi utpadpratibandhkatva- capacity of the body to not allow manifestation of diseases or pathogenesis in the body.

Thus, Vyadhi kshamatva refers to the body's inherent resistance and defensive capability to prevent the onset and progression of diseases. Analysing Ayurvedic classical texts reveals a very close relationship between Vyadhi kshamatva and the concept of Oja. In general, Oja is linked to the concepts of Bala (strength) and Vyadhi kshamatva (defence capacity or immunity of the body). The word Oja is derived from the Sanskrit root "Ubja" with the suffix "Asun", which together signify strength, vitality, and energy. Oja is defined as the final and perfect essence of the Saptadhatu, which begins with Rasa and ends with Shukra dhatu. Oja is the purest and finest essence created by combining all seven Dhatus (body components). Oja is regarded as the fundamental energy that provides resistance to bodily decay and degeneration, acting as the body's natural immunity against diseases. Considering these aspects, an attempt has been made in present review to explore some more information about the concept of Oja and its basics in Ayurveda.

View on Oja

When Shukra (sperm) unites with Shonita (ovum), the Paka (metabolic transformation) of Shukradhatu takes place, signifying fertilization. During this process, two components are formed — Sara (nutritive essence) and Mala (excretory products) [14]. This Oja performs its Avastambha function and promotes foetal life in Garbha. There are two kinds of Oja: Para Oja and Apra Oja [15]. Thus, the Oja can be regarded as the product of conception, have been derived from sperm and ovum; they contain the Sara of all Dhatus, which makes them viable. When the heart develops later in intrauterine life, it enters the heart and circulates throughout the foetus's body via the vessels connected to it. Every tissue in the foetal body receives and is supported by Oja. As a result, Oja is said to be present at all stages of intrauterine life. This Oja a component, which are responsible for survival and performing important functions inside the body, manifests both resistance and immunity. In a nutshell, Oja has been regarded as a vital force in the body's defence mechanism.

Types of Oja

According to Acharya Chakrapani, there are two kinds of Ojas [20]. [1]. For Oja According to Acharya Charaka, Oja that resides in the Hridaya (heart) is known as Para Oja. [21] It is the supreme type of Oja that is most vital and valuable part of life. It comes in the form of Ashta Bindu (eight drops) Oja. It is extremely pure (there are no waste ingredients). Because this para Oja is responsible for the continuation of life, any decrease or loss in the volume of para Oja will result in severe diseases and the person's death. As a result, the protection of Para Oja should be prioritized [2]. Apra Oja is the Oja that is present throughout the body. Therefore, the preservation and protection of Para Oja should be accorded the highest importance, as it is the vital essence responsible for sustaining life and maintaining overall health and immunity.. Apra Oja is the Oja that is present throughout the body. Because the properties of Apra Oja are similar to those of Shleshma, it is also known as Shlaishmika Oja. According to Acharya Charaka, the quantity of Apra Oja in a healthy individual is Ardhanjali (half an Anjali — with one Anjali representing the volume held by two hands joined together in a cup shape, specific to the individual). Ancient Ayurvedic texts use Anjali Pramana as the standard unit for measuring body fluids. A reduction in the volume of Apra Oja leads to a decline in bodily strength and increases susceptibility to various diseases.

Qualities of Oja

Acharya Charaka has described ten qualities of Oja that are similar to Kshira (milk) and Ghrita (ghee) while being diametrically opposed to Madya (alcohol) and Visha (poison). Guru (heaviness), Sheeta (coolness), Mridu (softness), Shlakshna (smoothness), Bahalam (capable of spreading), Madhura (sweetness), Sthira (stable/firmness), Prasanna (pleasant), Picchila

(sticky), and Snigdha (unctuousness) are some of these qualities. Bala and Oja According to Acharya Charaka, Agni is the source of Bala, Arogya, Ayu, Prana, and Oja.

Bala is further classified into three types as follows:

1. **Sahaja bala**- Sahaja bala is the power of disease resistance that exists from birth, making it natural or inborn Bala. Some people have been observed to be physically strong since birth, while others have been observed to be physically weak since birth. While explaining Sahaja bala, Acharya Charaka stated that Sahaja bala is the natural Bala of the Sharira and Satva, i.e. body and mind. Sahaja bala is related to an individual's constitutional strength. As a result, natural strength does not require any extraneous factor for its creation or growth. It is well known that some people are naturally strong, while others are naturally weak. It can be said that this is due to the Sahaja bala which is acquired genetically.
2. **Kalaja bala** - Kalaja bala is the power of disease resistance that is influenced by seasonal traits and the age of the person. This bala has dissipated and is at its lowest in Adanakala. Shishira, Vasanta, and Grishma rhtus are the hot seasons of the year, and Adanakala corresponds to them. On the other hand, this bala is conserved, and its highest optimum level is observed in Visargakala, which corresponds to the cool seasons of the year, Varsha, Sharada, and Hemanta rhtus. In terms of age, the middle-aged person has the highest Kalaja bala, while the younger persons and olders have the lowest.
3. **Yuktikrita bala**-Yuktikrita bala is the process of increasing the body's resistance to disease through proper nutrition and Rasayana (rejuvenation) therapies. A proper diet, as well as appropriate lifestyle changes, are required to achieve this level of Bala.

Vitiation of the Oja

According to Acharya Sushruta, the causes of Ojas vitiation are Abhighata (any or trauma), Kshaya (malnourishment or impaired metabolism), Kopa (anger), Shoka (grief), chinta (excessive thinking), Shrama (vigorous physical work or exertion), and Kshudha (voracious appetite).

The Vata and Pitta Doshas are aggravated as a result of these causes. As a result, both the quantitative and qualitative depletion of Oja occurs, and then Oja gets easily displaced from its primary seat, which is the heart.

General clinical features of vitiation of Oja

Bhaya (fearfulness or phobia), Daurbalya (weakness), Vyathitendriyata (fatigue especially at its sensory and motor organs), Dushchhaya (altered skin complexion), Durmanah (lack of self-confidence), Rukshatva (dry-roughness) and Kshaya (remarkable emaciation of body).

Discussion

The significance of Oja is in charge of the body's vitality throughout life. According to Acharya Charaka, Oja is the most powerful of all Pranayatana (vitality sites). Oja is in charge of the foetus's vitality during pregnancy. It becomes unstable in the eighth month of pregnancy, causing labor to be unpredictable. As a result, its stability is critical for full-term birth. Oja is essential for maintaining Dhatus' superior quality. As a result, it is directly related to the superior functions of all tissues in the body. Oja provides physical and mental strength. Thus, physical and mental strength are determined by the quantity and quality of Oja.

Oja is in charge of maintaining Vyadhikshamatava (immunity). It is critical for health preservation and disease prevention. It is also essential in combating disease pathogens if the disease occurs. Doshas (regulatory functional factors of the body) cannot function in the absence of Oja. Oja is the most refined outcome of digestion, metabolism, absorption, and assimilation. Oja is the sap of one's life energy, which, when sufficient, is associated with immunity and, when deficient, with weakness, fatigue, and, eventually, disease. In a nutshell, Oja is the sap of the entire physiology and an important factor in maintaining a healthy life.

Oja is the essence of dhatus, giving the body strength, improving immunity, and caring for the body's well-being. It is present throughout the body, just like ghee is in milk and honey is in

flowers. It is the Sarabhaga (essential essence) of all the Dhatus. If we want to be in perfect health, we must eliminate the ama in our bodies and focus on producing Oja, which is the vital life energy. Oja is thought to be the most refined outcome of digestion, metabolism, absorption, and assimilation. Oja promotes mental clarity and emotional balance. This is our best defense against mental and physical illness. Oja is completely responsible for our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Oja 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, Oja is the sap of the entire physiology and sustains the life of an individual. Therefore, Oja is considered as vital nectar of life.

Immunoglobulin molecules are made up of two different types of amino acid chains: (H) heavy chain and (L) light chain. The enzyme in macrophages converts glutamine to glutamate.[31] The majority of neurotransmitters that can influence mind-body interactions are made up of amino acids. Furthermore, the amino acid tyrosine is the source of two groups of hormones: thyroid and catecholamine (epinephrine and norepinephrine). An optimal balance of amino acids in the diet and circulation was critical for maintaining whole-body homeostasis. Functional amino acids regulate a critical metabolic pathway that is required for maintenance, growth, reproduction, and immunity. Dietary supplementation with one or a combination of these amino acids may be beneficial for the improvement of health problems at various stages of life.

Amino acids, often referred to as the body's building blocks, join together to form proteins and polypeptides. The breakdown of certain amino acid chains can lead to the accumulation of harmful substances in the body. Amino acids also play a key role in optimizing metabolic processes, supporting muscle growth, enhancing milk production, improving egg and meat quality, and boosting athletic performance, while preventing excessive fat deposition and reducing adiposity. They are essential for maintaining nutritional status and overall health in individuals. Consequently, the role of Ojas in Ayurveda can be closely compared to the functions of both essential and non-essential amino acids in sustaining vitality and promoting health.

Conclusion

Oja is considered the precious nectar of the body and must be preserved at all costs [2]. The practical symptoms of Ojo Dushti should be evaluated in every patient, as stress is a common factor, and early detection can prevent adverse effects. Ayurveda emphasizes the significance of Oja, as it is essential for survival and the performance of vital bodily functions. Although Oja is the essence of all Dhatus, its production, maintenance, storage, utilization, and proper circulation must remain consistent and balanced. From a nutritional perspective, nature provides approximately 300 amino acids, some of which were present early in the genetic code, while others appeared later. Adequate dietary intake is necessary, as deficiency can impair protein synthesis and lead to various health complications.

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