

A Critical Review Of Ojas: An Ayurveda Immunity Booster

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ABSTRACT:

Boosting immunity is the new requirement of today's world. So, the factors responsible for immunity are getting the importance. Ojas is one of the key factors responsible for immunity. Ojas connects the mind to the body and consciousness. It nourishes all body tissues and influences the physical, psychological and emotional life of a person directly. So, an attempt is made to study Ojas and Ojovaha Srotas in details including its formation, primary seat, types, perception of Ojas according to various acharyas, symptoms of its elevation as well as depletion and how to assess it practically in the patient, ways to increase the Ojas etc. This can help to have a deep insight of the subject and can help in the early detection of the Ojodushtilakshanas. Also, diseases including Ojodushti are given collectively in order to elaborate the practical view of the subject. The further scope of the study includes the pre-clinical and clinical trials of the Ojovrudhnikar drug (drugs increasing Ojas)

KEYWORDS: Ojas, Ojovaha Srotas, Immunity, Par Oja, Apar Oja, Covid 19

INTRODUCTION:

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the world is going through a historic yet unpleasant time. The situation is precarious because scientists have given further warnings that everyone needs to be prepared for the second recurrence of the disease also the World Health Organization have declared that only lockdown is not enough to deal with the hazardous effects of the pandemic. In such condition panic is obvious, which further leads to weakened Immunity. As it is seen that people with good immunity remained unaffected during the pandemic or has lesser symptoms of the disease, immunity and related factors are required to be reviewed critically.

According to Ayurveda Ojas is one of the main factors responsible for a person's immunity. Thus, to study Ojas and Ojovahasrotas the need of an hour. An attempt is

made to study all the aspects related to *Ojas* including its formation, primary seat, types, perception of *Ojas* according to various acharyas, symptoms of its elevation as well as depletion and how to assess it practically in the patient, ways to increase the *Ojas* in order to boost the immunity etc.

Ojas is a Sanskrit term which means “vigor” or “essence of vitality.” Formation process of *Ojas* is similar to how ghee is produced from milk¹. *Ojas* is an endproduct refined through many natural transformations and thus is a precious one. A person with exceptional *Ojas* rarely becomes sick. *Ojas* is considered as the pure essence of the *Kaphadosha*. Here an attempt is made to discuss all aspects of *Oja*, like formation of *Ojas*, its actual appearance, properties and effects on the body when the *Ojas* is increased or decreased in quantity.

AIM and OBJECTIVES:

To study the *Ojas and Ojovahasrotas* in details

To study the practical ways to increase the *Ojas* in order to boost the immunity

MATERIALS and METHODS:

For the detailed study of *Ojas* and *Ojovahasrotas*, thorough literary study has been conducted using *Samhitas*, reference books, various journals and publications.

Moolasthan(Primary Seat) of OjovahaSrotas:

Acharya Charak in *Sutrasthana* stated that ten vessels attached to the heart carry *Ojas* and pulsate it all over the body². Therefore, the primary seat of *Ojas* is the heart, from where it circulates to the entire body.

Formation of Ojas:

Every living thing takes food to be alive, *Ojas* is considered as the ultimate refined result of digestion, metabolism, absorption and assimilation of that food. According to *Samhitas*, *Ojas* is collected from the body's seven tissues which are *Rasa* (plasma), *Rakta* (blood), *Mamsa* (muscle) *Meda* (fat), *Asthi* (bone), *Majja* (bone marrow), and *Shukra* (semen and ovum) by the influence of *Agni* (digestive fire). The process of formation of *Ojas* is similar to how a bee collects honey from the essence of many flowers.

According to *Acharya Vagbhat*, during the process of digestion or *paka* formation of two things are observed i.e., *mala* and *sara*. *Mala* is the *malarupi Ojas* and *sara* is the *garbha*.³

Types of Ojas:

There are two types of *Ojas*: 1) *Par* and 2) *Apar*

Quantity:

The quantity of *Par Ojas* is eight *bindu* (drops) and that of *Apar Ojas* is half *anjali*.

Perception of Ojas according to various Acharyas:

According to some *Acharyas* *Ojas* is formed in the form of *Upadhatu* (byproduct) while according to others it is formed in the form of *Mala* (waste material)

Ojas as Upadhatu:

According to *Acharya Sushruta* *Oja* is the essence of *Saptadhatu* and it is the seat for strength⁴. According to *Sharangdhar Samhita*, *Ojas* is *Upadhatu* of *Shukra Dhatu*.⁵

Ojas as Mala:

Acharya Vagbhat in *Ashtanga Hridayam* states that *Ojas* is the essence of *Saptadhatu* and formed as the *Mala* of *Shukra*.⁶

Ojovahasrotodushthetu (etiological factors affecting Ojas):

As *Ojodushti* is one of the main causes of decreased immunity and *nidanparivarjan* is the foremost treatment of any disease, finding and removing the factors causing *ojodushti* is important.

Ojas undergoes depletion due to *Abhighat* (injury), *Dhatukshaya* (tissue depletion), *Kop*(anger), *shoka*(grief), *dhyana* (worry), *shram* (exertion), *Kshudha* (hunger) etc. resulting into the flowing out from the *dhatu*s and getting associated with *tejas*(heat factor from the body)and instigated by *Vata* which gives various discomforts to the body.⁷

OjovahasrotasdushtiLakshana:

Dushti means unwanted changes in the functions of the *Ojas*. There are 3 types of *Ojodushti*: 1) *Ojovisrams* 2) *Ojovyapat* and 3) *Ojokshaya*. The signs and symptoms of *Ojodushti* are very important because detecting them early can help reverting the *Ojodushti* earlier and can prevent the hazardous effects of *Ojakshaya*.

Ojovisransa:

Visrams means displacement from its normal place⁸. The symptoms when *Ojas* is displaced from its place includes: *Sandhivishlesh*(sagging of Joints), *Gatranamsadanam*(weakness of the body), *Doshachyavanam*(displacement of *Doshas* from their normal seats) and *Kriyasannirodha* (impairment in the activities)

Ojovyapat:

Vyapat means *Ojas* gets vitiated by *dushtaDosha* and *Dushya*⁸. *OjoVyapat* can lead to *Stabdha* (stiffness and heaviness in the body parts especially limbs), *VataShopha* (swelling due to *Vata*), *Varnabheda* (discoloration or loss of complexion), *Glani* (exhaustion), *Tandra* (stupor) and *Nidra* (excess sleep).

Ojakshaya:

Here *Kshaya* means decrease in the quantity of *Ojas*. *Ojakshaya* can cause *Murchha* (Fainting), *MamsaKshaya* (wasting of muscles), *Moha* (unconsciousness), *Pralap* (delirium) and *Maran* (death).⁸

According to *CharakSamhita*⁹ and *Ashtanga Sangraha*¹⁰ symptoms of *Ojakshaya* includes: *Bibheti* (fear complex or full of fear), *Durbalo* (generalized weakness), *Dhyayati* (worries a lot), *Vyathitendriya* (discomfort in sense organs), *Dushchhaya* (loss of complexion), *Durmana* (mindset becomes unstable), *Ruksha* (roughness in the body), *Ksham* (emaciation)

Prognosis of diseases caused by *Ojodushti*:

OjaVisrams and *Vyapat* are curable while *Ojakshaya* is suggested to be left untreated as it is non curable¹¹

OjovruddhiLakshana:

Like the depletion *Ojas* also undergoes to elevation. This causes elevation in the properties and functions of *Ojas*. Increased *Ojas* is responsible for unique growth, nourishment and promotes strength.¹²

Practical observations for *Ojodushti* and *Ojovruddhi*:

Practically one can find the physical symptoms like tendency to get sick frequently, heaviness of body and mind, dry and cracked skin, Muscle pain, joint pain, cold and numb hands and feet, weaker sense organs, impaired bodily functions and frequent drowsiness and fatigue. On Mental level practically we can observe the person with *Ojakshaya* has mental confusion, lack of focus, consistently negative attitude, anxiety and depression. Due to *dushtaKaphaDosha* there can be an obstruction in the flow of *Ojas* due to which symptoms like: feelings of numbness, heaviness in the limbs, joint swelling or lipomas etc. along with the development of diabetes, obesity, Glaucoma, high cholesterol and blood pressure can appear making the person sick. On the contrary when there is rise in the properties of *Ojas* practically one can experience ample of energy, glowing complexion, sparkling eyes, increased physical strength, sharp sense organs,

body without no aches and pains, rejuvenated health and mind. A person with *Ojovridhi* will experience a sense of well-being, happiness and joy.

Diseases which include *Ojodushiti*:

The *dushiti* of *Ojovahasrotas* can lead to generation of many diseases like –

***UdanavruttaPrana*:**

Loss of activities, *Oja*, *bala* and complexion is observed in *UdanavruttaPrana*.¹³

***Jwara*:**

Jwara is the king of all diseases. It causes death to all creatures on the earth and which is seriously afflicting individual.¹⁴

***AbhinyasJwara* or *HataujasaJwara*:**

As there is loss or decrease of *Ojas*, this condition is said to be difficult to cure.¹⁵

***OjoNirodhajJwara*:**

OjonirodhajJwara manifest due to depletion of *Ojas* by aggravated *Pitta* and *Vata*. Symptoms of *Jwara* gets greatly aggravated on 7th, 10th and 12th day or symptoms may subside on 7th, 10th and 12th day respectively.¹⁶

***Shosh*:**

In case of *Shosharoga* there will be severe dryness or extreme depletion of tissues leading to loss of *Ojas*.¹⁷

***Rajyakshma*:**

Disturbed function of *Agni* leads to manifestation of *kitta* (waste substances) in excess as a result of which *Ojas* diminishes. That is why *mala* is to be protected to support the body.¹⁸

***Prameha*:**

In case of *AparaOjas* is involved and not the *ParaOjas* because even slight reduction in the *ParaOjas* leads to death.¹⁹

***Pandu*:**

Due to excessive exacerbation of three *Doshas* especially *Pitta* afflicts *Dhatu*s as a result complexion, strength, unctuousness and *Ojas* get exceedingly reduced leading to development of *Pandu roga*.²⁰

***Murcha*:**

Unconsciousness, loss of strength is the *purvaroopa* observed in *Murcha*.²¹ *Acharya Sushruta* has explained *Bala* has three kinds of abnormalities namely *Balavyapat*, *Balavistransa* and *Balakshaya* and the symptoms are similar to that of *Ojovyapat*, *Ojovistransa* and *Ojakshaya* respectively.²²

Aahar and Vihar for increasing *Ojas*

The best foods for building *Ojas* are pure whole milk and ghee for non-vegetarians *Mamsarasa* is the best. To increase the potency of ghee and milk, it should be triturated with the drugs of *Jivaneeyagana*. Slowing down and getting enough rest. Hurry, Worry and Curry are depleting and destroying the *Ojas*. Avoid sleeping during the day. Use of pleasant fragrances can act as *Hridya* (good for heart) and thus helps to increase the *Ojas*. Reproductive tissue is in line for digestion right before *Ojas*, meaning it is the last of the seven tissues to be fed so, limiting the sexual activity helps in reducing the depletion of *Ojas*. Avoiding excessive fasting and eating dry and stale food helps to increase the *Ojas*. *Yogasan*s, *Pranayam* helps to improve the *Ojas*.

DISCUSSION:

In the recent COVID pandemic, immunity was the only hope of all the human beings. Till date there is no vaccine or sure shot treatment available so self-Immunity is the savior. So, one can say that many such pandemics happened in the past and many more will come in future. But only those with good immunity will remain unaffected. Also, Ayurveda concepts of immunity are not only disease based but includes the wholesome approach and thus can help to boost overall generalized immunity and health. So, it is very much important to study them in details. As *Ojas* is an important factor related to immunity its importance increases many times. *Ojas* can be considered as the living protoplasmic substance and is the basis of the physical immunity

of every cell. It is supposed to protect the integrity of the individual. Few of the related articles on this aspect were reported²³⁻²⁸. It is formed from the last (reproductive) tissue of the shukra/arthava and contains all five basic elements. It passes through the heart, circulates around the body and maintains the natural resistance of all tissues. If due to any reason, the flow of *Ojas* in the body stops, the body becomes considerably weak²⁹. As the *Ojas* has properties similar to *KaphaDosh*, treatment of *Ojodush*ti includes slowing down the daily routine and taking the food and medicines that are similar to the properties of *KaphaDosh*. Meditation and Pranayama helps in boosting the properties of *Ojas*³⁰⁻³¹.

CONCLUSION:

- 1 *Ojas* is the precious nectar from the body and thus has to be preserved by all means.
- 2 The practical symptoms of *Ojodush*ti have to be assessed in every patient as everybody is going through some sort of stress and early diagnosis can prevent the hazardous effects.
- 3 *Ojovardhak* measures can be implemented on the daily basis in the situation like COVID19 pandemic in order to stay unaffected.

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