



A REVIEW ON THE CONCEPT OF OJUS

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DOI: 10.7897/2277-4572.05529

Received on: 10/07/16 Revised on: 08/08/16 Accepted on: 16/08/16

ABSTRACT

Concept of ojus is very important point of discussion available in Ayurvedic literature. As per the descriptions in the texts and the functions attributed to ojus, it reveals that ojus is an essential factor for survival of the human. Ayurveda says that utmost purity can be achieved by preserving the most refined element- 'the ojus'. Many acharyas differed in their opinion about ojus and many controversial opinions also exist. The term ojus is used in various references as bodily strength, vigour, energy, virility, splendor, light, metallic luster and the ultimate essence of all dhatus (tissues) in the body. Therefore a review on the concept of ojus is need of the hour. The importance of ojus, what the concept ojus really meant in Ayurveda and also according to modern science, what are the pathological aspects etc are to be discussed. In this paper a humble attempt is made to reveal "what ojus exactly means".

Key words: ojus, dhatus, Ayurveda

INTRODUCTION

Concept of ojus is very important and unique in Ayurveda. Ojus is considered to be the factor which has the strength to keep the body, sense organs, mind and soul together in a functional harmony. Its purity represents swasthya (health) and its impurity - amaya (disease). Going deep to the concept of ojus, we can find that the factor ojus is responsible for the entire phenomenon like health, diseases and even death.

There exist many different and controversial opinions relating to ojus among various acharyas of Ayurveda. Therefore it is really hard to pinpoint which physical component is ojus exactly. For that knowledge of conceptual aspects, critical analysis of different views and modern correlation of ojus is needed. Since its impurity leads to ill health, knowledge about its pathological aspects is also necessary.

CONCEPTUAL ASPECT

The word ojus can be found in vedas and also in other sciences like Natyasashtra, Jyothisashtra etc. Ojo sabda is derived from the root 'ubj' means 'arjava'; meaning 'that which keeps straight'. Therefore the factor responsible for the undeviated functional pathway of life can be termed as ojus.

Going through various Ayurvedic classics ojus can be defined as the essence of seven dhatus starting with rasa and ending with sukradhatu. Though it is located in hridaya, it spreads all over the body and maintains it. It is snigdha (unctuous), soma (cool), sudha (pure) and appears to be eeshat lohita peetaka (slight reddish yellow in colour). Its destruction definitely leads to the destruction of life and its presence leads to maintenance of life. Various aspects of body depend upon ojus¹. It is said as the garbharasa for the embryo². Location of ojus is hridaya according

to Vagbhata. But Bhela in Bhela Samhita Sareerasthana 5th chapter mentioned 12 seats viz- pitha, kapha, rasa, raktha, mamsa, meda, asthi, majja, sukra, sweda, pureesha and mala. It means that ojus exists in each part of the body. Dasadhamani is the location according to Charaka Samhita.

While explaining the formation of ojus, Charakacharya relates it with the collection of honey by honey bees³. Though the flowers are different in nature, the quality of honey remains the same. Likewise ojus is formed from the saphadhatu. The seven dhatus are different in structure and function. Though they are different, ojus possess same level of purity in its refined state. In Dalhana commentary of Susrutha Samhita, it is mentioned that the formation of ojus is just like, how ghee is formed from milk (Ksheerath ghritamiva).

Acharya Charaka mentioned ojus in 17th and 30th chapter of Sutrasthana. But the qualities of ojus are said in madathyaya chikitsa while explaining the qualities of madya⁴. It is said that ojus has 10 properties opposite to madya viz, guru (heavy), seeta (cool), mridu (soft), slakshna (smooth), bahala (viscous), madhura (sweet), sthira (stable), prasanna (clear), pichila (slimy) and snigdha (unctuous). Acharya Susrutha mentioned some other qualities like suklam (white colour), saram (flowing), mritsnam (sticky) and pranayathanam (lodges life). Also it is mentioned that ojus resembles the colour of sarpi (ghee), taste of madhu (honey) and odour of laja (fried paddy)⁵.

Ojus is divided into two-para and aparā⁶. But no reference is seen separately about these two types. Only quantitative difference is mentioned – para as ashtabindukam (8 drops) and aparā aradhanjaliparimitam (half anjali). In prameha it is the aradhanjali ojus and not ashtabindu ojus which get reduced in quantity, because a slight reduction in the quantity of para ojus will lead to death. But in prameha, even though there is

reduction in quantity of ojus, individual survives.⁷ It has not been possible so far to identify correctly these two types of ojus and so it is a subject of further research.

DIFFERENT VIEWS

Exactly which physical component is indicated by ojus is not well understood. This is because; the compendia indicate more than one entity as ojus. Therefore a critical analysis of different opinions relating to ojus is necessary.

It is said that ojus exists in rasadhātu⁸. Bhavaprakasa also opines that ojus is formed from rasadhātu. Ojus is said to be sareera rasa sneha (unctuous part of sareerarasa)⁹. Ojus has snigdha guna. As milk bears ghee in its hidden form, ojus too exists in the same way in the body as sareera rasa. Param theja of all dhatus is collectively termed as ojus¹⁰. Vagbhata also opines the same. While commenting, Hemadri says that ojus is nothing but the param theja (supreme excellence) of all dhatus¹¹. So ojus can be considered as the thejoroopa of all dhatus. Acharya Charaka says that death will occur as a result of ojonasa. Therefore we can say that ojus is pranayatana (it lodges life)¹².

Susrutha opines that bala is equal to ojus¹³. Bala is the karmakaranasakthi, i.e. the ability to perform physical and mental activities. But according to Ashtanga Hridaya bala is one of the symptoms of ojo vridhi (Thushti pushti balodaya). So bala can be considered as the reflection of ojus and a strong indicator of ojus. Ojus is responsible for the vyadhikshamatwa sakthi of the body. Vyadhikshamatwa is the power of the body to resist against diseases. It is nothing, but bala of the body. Acharya Charaka in Vimanasthana, states that sarvadhatusarapurusha possesses great strength, happiness, resistance to difficulties, self confidence in all enterprises, virtuous acts, firm and well built body, correct gait, resonant, melodious and high pitched voice, power, wealth, enjoyments, honour, slowness of aging process, resistance for diseases, larger number of children with similar qualities and longevity. By analyzing this, it is evident that some similarities exist between these functions and the bala described by Susrutha. This bala is nothing but ojus. So ojus can be considered as the sara of all dhatus.

Charaka beautifully explains that the function of prakritakapha or prakritakapha itself is ojus or balam¹⁴. Also some similarities exist in qualities like guru, seeta, mridu, picchila, sthira, madhura etc between ojus and kapha. Functional similarities can also be seen like sthairyakrit, balakrit etc. In prakrita avastha, kapha gives bala to the body. Hence kapha in prakrita avastha or normal state (prakrita kapha) can be correlated with ojus in the body.

Sarngadhara Samhita mentions ojus as upadhātu¹⁵. Upadhatus possess less quality than dhatus. But ojus is more powerful than them. So it can be said that ojus is not equal to upadhātu or it cannot be said as upadhātu. Also ojus cannot be equated with dhatus. Dhatus have two functions –dharana karma (to support) and poshanakarama (to nourish). According to Chakrapani, ojus has only dharanakarma; it is not poshanam in nature¹⁶. Again Ashtanga Hridaya states that it enters all dhatus by its potency. So ojus cannot be correlated with dhātu, but it is the essence of all dhatus. All dhatus contribute to its formation. Ojus is said as Jeevasonitham¹⁷. Both ojus and raktha are included under dasapranayatanas. But raktha is not ojus, it is a dhātu. So ojus is not equal to raktadhātu, it is the essence of raktadhātu.

It is said that ojus is the essence of sukradhātu or sukra visesham¹⁸. It means that majority of ojus is contributed by

sukradhātu. So ojus is known as sukrasara. But ojus does not have the manapreenana function of sukradhātu. So ojus is not sukradhātu, but the essence of sukradhātu. Ashtanga Hridaya considers ojus as dhatumala¹⁹. Sangrahaakara opines that due to its extreme purity, there is no malabhavam in ojus²⁰. So ojus cannot be correlated as mala. So in nutshell ojus can be said as sara or tejoroopa of all the dhatus, sareera rasa sneha, pranayatana, bala and prakritakapha.

PATHOLOGICAL ASPECT

Doshas, dhatus and malas in our body undergo vridhhi (increase) and kshayaavasthas (decrease). Likewise ojus also possesses vridhhi and kshaya. Ojovridhhi implies health whereas ojekshaya - pathology. Charakacharya explains the causes of ojekshaya as vyayama (physical exercise), anasana (fasting), chintna (anxiety), rooksha, alpa and pramitasana (intake of ununctuous, less quantity and habitual intake of food having one taste only)²¹. According to Susrutha, ojekshaya occurs due to abhigata (injury), dhaturkshaya (persistent wasting diseases), kopa (anger), soka (grief) etc. Due to these causes, ojus flows out of the dhatus getting associated with teja and instigated by Vatha, troubles the body greatly.²² Signs and symptoms of ojekshaya are bibheti (fear without cause), durbala (constant weakness), abheekshnam dhyayati (excessive thoughts or worries), vyadhithendriya (affliction of sense organs with pain), duscchaya (loss of complexion) etc.²³

Susrutha specifically mentions three aspects of ojekshaya viz. ojovisramsas (displaced ojus), ojovyapath (impaired ojus) and ojekshaya (absolute loss of ojus). Ojovisramsas means, the displacement of ojus due to injury. The manifestations are sandhi vslesha (displacement of joints of body), gathranam sadanam (bodyache), dosha chyavanam (displacement of doshas from the respective locations) and kriya sannirodha (impairment of functions of body including speech, and mind). Ojovyapath means spread of abnormal ojus due to vitiated dosha, dooshya etc. The manifestations are sthabdha gurugathratha (inertness and heaviness of extremities), Vatasobha (oedema due to vatha), varnabheda (different colours of skin like fair, dark etc), glani (fatigue of senses) and tandra (drowsiness) and nidra (sleep). Ojekshaya means loss of oja in its physiological measure. Manifestations are moorcha (loss of functions of sense organs), mamsakshaya (wasting of muscles), moha (stupor), pralapa (delirium) and marana (death)²⁴.

In visramsas and vyapath, bala should be enhanced by adopting treatment which is not opposite to Vatha and Pitha²⁵. In ojo kshaya, jeevaneeya oushadhas (drugs with restorative property), ksheera (milk), mamsarasa (meat soup) etc should be employed.

MODERN ASPECT

As ojus is the structural and functional basis of existence of life, it functionally inclines more towards proteins. Proteins are the building blocks of life. Some proteins involved in structural support, others involve in bodily movements or defense mechanism. Functionally proteins can be divided into Catalytic protein, structural protein, contractile protein, transport protein, genetic protein, regulatory protein or hormones and immune protein. Serum proteins or plasma proteins are transport proteins which are concerned with the transport of lipids, hormones, vitamins, minerals, regulation of cellular activity and functioning of immune system. The protein molecules are having high molecular weight of 10000 to one lakh IU coincides with acharya's description of guruguna of ojus. Plasma proteins also show a yellow colour when separated like ghritavarna of ojus. Plasma proteins like glycoprotein are sweet also. Louis

Piller an American scientist discovered a new serum protein which is believed to be a significant factor of natural resistance called properdin. Failure of properdin lessens the immunity. Thus plasma proteins and properdin system in many criteria satisfy with structural and functional qualities of ojus²⁶.

CONCLUSION

Ojus can neither be included in dosha, dhātu or mala. It can be considered as the refined form of each dhātus and saptadhatu collectively. Ojus performs its functions most accurately in the normalcy of doshas as doshasamyā leads to dhātusamyā and thereby increasing bala or vyadhikshamatwa of body. The different views regarding ojus indicate the wide range of functionality ojus provides. It looks after structural and functional administration of the body. Therefore ojus can be considered as a primordial factor for survival as well as good maintenance of health and to fight against death and decay. Research oriented clinical studies in the field of ojus can provide revolutionary changes in the health culture of our society and thus provide valuable contribution in public health.

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How to cite this article:

Braivin Camly R, Raj Kumar, Anjana, Suby Balakrishnan. A review on the concept of ojus. *J Pharm Sci Innov.* 2016;5(5):147-149 <http://dx.doi.org/10.7897/2277-4572.05529>

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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