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A Comprehensive Review on Ojas For Healthy Living

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ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda the formation of Ojas, the essence of ancient immune system, its importance, as well as factors that influence the quality and quantity of Ojas is analyzed from an ancient science perspective. In this review the various methods of enhancing Ojas are enumerated. A simplified version of 'Kayakalpa yoga' is supplemented here as an ancient technique that can be used to harness and optimize Ojas within the physical body.

Keywords: Ojas, essence of food, energy, stamina, immunity

Introduction

According to the ancient science of Ayurveda, Ojas is the essence or energy that is produced as an end product of the food in the digestive system after it forms seven different types of body tissues [1]. These seven tissues are called as "Saptadhatu," which are formed in the following order:

Rasa Dhatu (plasma) → Rakta Dhatu (blood) → Mamsa Dhatu (muscle) → Medo Dhatu (adipose tissue) → Asthi Dhatu (bones/cartilage) → Majja Dhatu (bone marrow and nervous tissue) → Shukra Dhatu (reproductive fluids).

The final essence is Ojas which is formed from the last tissue, namely "Shukra Dhatu," and is the end product of a perfect digestion and metabolism, and is supposed responsible for the strength and stamina of the body which is a modern equivalent of an immune system.

Ojas and its importance has been emphasized by sage-scientists of India such as Avvaiyar, Thirumoola, Ramalinga Vallalar and many more in their excellent literary works drafted in ancient Tamil language. Some of them include Vinayagar Agaval, Thirumandhiram, Thiruvartup, etc.

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"Ojastu tejo dhaatunaam shukrantaanaam param smritam
Hridayasthamapi vyapi dehashthinibandhanam"

This is a Sanskrit phrase that explains the formation of Ojas from the seven tissue elements in the body and its location. "Ojas is the Tejas or Radiance of the living beings. Although located in the Heart, it pervades all over the body and is the sustainer of life energy" [2]. Here heart represents the place where thought arises.

When Ojas is adequate, it is evident in the healthy radiance, calm mind, good physical health and immunity, and an overall sense of well being exhibited by an individual. In other words, it is a reflection of the healthy state of all the cells and tissues of our body. "Balam," is a Sanskrit term which means strength or stamina and it is used as a synonym for "Ojas". "Balam" can refer to two different strengths: 1. Vyayama Shakti - capacity for physical exertion, and 2. Vyadhi Kshamatva - resistance against diseases.

Importance of Ojas [1]

Most importantly, it is said to stand as a "lamp at the door" between consciousness and matter, connecting them and thus ensuring that the sequence of natural law is expressed properly in the body [1].

Factors That Influence The Level of Ojas in The Body

Charaka, the author of Charaka Samhita, one of the oldest



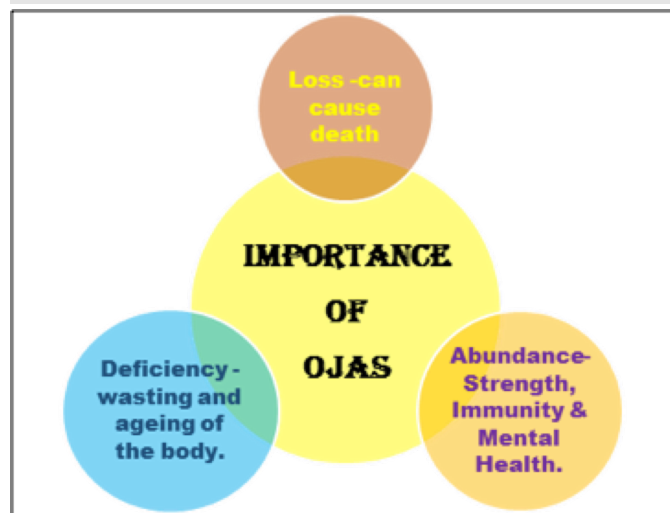


Figure 1: In abundance, Ojas can enhance strength, Immunity and Mental health whereas its deficiency leads to disease. Total loss of Ojas is Death.

and most important ancient authoritative writings on Ayurveda, classifies the factors influencing ojas into three types.

1. Sahaja - Genetically bestowed, these are present from the time of conception.

2. Kaalaja - Based on the season as well as age, these are in constant flux. For example, in our youth we tend to be stronger and more resistant to diseases and changes in the environment. As we grow older, our resistance gradually decreases. Also, in the Adaana kaala (northern solstice-fall, spring, summer) resistance is comparatively lower than during the Visarga kaala (southern solstice-monsoons, autumn, early winter).

3. Yuktija- The resistance or immunity that can be improved by special, intelligent efforts e.g. good, activities, nature of thoughts, rasayana therapy in Ayurveda, etc. [3].

Other factors that decrease the level of ojas in our body are anger, sorrow, excessive thinking, exertion, hunger and injury [1].

The modern allopathic medicine focuses not on health but on disease. If the focus is on disease, then the obvious question would be how can one procure health? It is analogous to getting rich by studying poverty [1]. According to W.H.O the definition of health is as follows: "A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" [4].

Good health, which reflects the harmonious integration of molecules, cells, tissues and organs, is dynamically stable: when displaced by disease, compensation and correction are common, even without medical care. Physiology and computational biology now suggest that healthy dynamic stability arises through the combination of specific feedback

mechanisms. [5].

Ojas can be the parameter that can be tapped into in order to maintain the dynamic stability. As discussed earlier, it can be enhanced by various methods such as observing Sadvritta (code of conduct) as advocated by Ayurveda.

To promote the creation and flow of Ojas, one needs a good diet focused on pure foods, referred to as "Saatvik" in Ayurveda. The body can easily digest Saatvik food and extract its Ojas or prime energy. The most Saatvik foods include organic milk, almonds, sesame, honey, rice, and fruits. Some foods are difficult if not impossible for the body to convert into Ojas, including meat, poultry, fish, oily foods, cheese, leftovers, processed food, and items with an excess of sour or salty tastes. Food that has been canned, frozen, or reheated may not produce as much Ojas as freshly prepared meals. In addition to this, consumption of alcoholic beverages and smoking cigarettes are noted as Ojas contaminators [6].

A lot of will power may be required to stop consuming alcohol or to stop smoking, and there is a need for a method that will gradually develop the consciousness in us, which would help in getting back to the right way of living, according to Ayurveda. This should be a simple and effective method which could be followed on a regular basis by everyone easily, spending a minimal amount of time and energy to keep the level of Ojas in our body at an optimal level.

The point of access to Ojas in the body can be the Mooladhara chakra which is the geometric center of the body around which the sexual organs are located. Mooladhara chakra is located between the anus and root of penis (perineum in the female) [7]. Swami Vivekananda also quotes that "Part of the human energy which is expressed as sex energy, in sexual thought, when checked and controlled, can easily be converted into Ojas" [8].

Saving Ojas

An analogy would be to assume the body to be an over-head tank filled with Ojas and as depicted in Figure 2, are the different water lines that supply ojas energy to different metabolisms, by carefully controlling the water valve. It is necessary that one needs to spend the Ojas judiciously. The following techniques will help us to achieve this.

Some important Techniques to enhance and protect Ojas include:

- Meditation-stream lines the flow of Ojas.
- Healthy and mindful eating-replenishes the depleted Ojas and reduces cravings.
- Proper rest-stores Ojas restored for the next day.
- Yoga- enhances the production and circulation of Ojas by establishing the proper flow of the four circulations namely, Air, Blood, Heat and Energy.



Figure 2: An analogy that the body is an over-head tank filled with Ojas and the different water lines would supply ojas to different body functions.

Yogiraj Vethathiri Maharishi has devised a simple method to access the Ojas from the Mooladhara chakra and recycle it all over the body by combining two simple techniques, namely 1.synchronization of breath, mind and body and 2.toning of nerves. This technique is called KayaKalpa yoga [9].

It has been shown that in students KayaKalpa Yoga improves concentration, memory and the ability to focus. In adults it helps in moderation of sexual desire, food, sleep and physical activity, tones up the nervous system and increases the body's immunity.

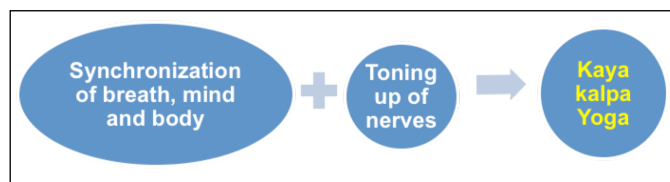


Figure 3: The process of Kayakalpa Yoga.

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Conclusion

Ojas is an important entity in ancient Indian Science that needs to be considered seriously whenever we address emerging problems owing to the impact of the current medical system. It has to be mentioned that the ancient techniques are stand-alone ones and may not be viewed under the lens of modern science and therefore it needs a novel paradigm approach for research. Enhancing Ojas through the various methods, one being Kayakalpa Yoga will greatly help improve the quality of life. Extensive research using paradigm shift experiments within the modern framework would help humanity resolve many of the contemporary health problems. Over all the awareness of Ojas enhancement will facilitate worldwide accessibility to several such methods and techniques for the wellbeing of humanity.

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