



Review Article

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A SURVEY ON ADDRESSING THE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF OJUS

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ABSTRACT

Ojus is one of the fundamental concepts in Ayurveda. Ojus is the essence of dhatus, which gives strength to the body, improves immunity and power and takes care of the well-being of the body. Ojus is responsible for consciousness, purity in thoughts, health, positivity in feelings in every situation, better immunity, longevity, intelligence and memory. According to Ayurveda, ojus is one of the essential elements for the maintenance and sustenance of life. Various authors have mentioned the concept of Ojus in their way, which has made Ojus more controversial. There are many research articles about ojus, but there are still grey areas in this concept. There is no proper understanding regarding its formation, colour, the logic behind its classification as para and apara, its relation with dhatu, upadhatu or mala etc. There is a need to focus on the above aspects regarding ojus and analyse for better understanding. This survey was conducted among postgraduate scholars of VPSV Ayurveda college Kottakkal to elicit the nature of their knowledge of the above ambiguities. The overall result of this survey has shown that the respondents have moderate clarity in the areas like the classification and site of ojus. On the other side, there is a lack of transparency in some areas like the dual nature, material nature (dravyatwa) etc. Most respondents did not share opinions in some typical areas. This approach addresses the ambiguities about ojus even though the final settlement of such issues is not intended.

Keywords: Ojus, Bala, Vyadhikshamatwa, Immunity

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, immunity is based on the concept of vyadhikshamatwa, Bala and ojus, so when there is dosha dhathu vitiation because of certain nidana, there will be a manifestation of vyadhi, and in this context, ojus will act as a prime soldier by using the bala as a weapon it fights against vyadhi and provide vyadhikshamatwa. Among these three concepts, different versions of various authors can be seen. Ojus has got a vital role in swastharakshana and achieving the special status of health, which is called positive health. A prima facie overview of available literature on ojus in Ayurvedic classics sometimes may lead to doubts /ambiguities by different versions available in explanation of ojus. There are many grey areas in this concept; quoting ojus as upadhathu, giving a structural description of ojus such as colour, taste, etc., are a few such versions. I attempt to understand the reason for the difference in various classics and address some critical questions regarding the concept of ojus.

Nirukthi

The term ojus is derived from adding asun prathyaya in oorja dhathu. Oorja means Arjava or that which keeps straight, amarakosha gives mainly two meanings for the word ojus, i.e., deepthi or prakasha and bala, there for the factor responsible for un deviated functional pathway of life can be termed as ojus. The word ojus can be found in the oldest available written document globally. In Vedic literature, various synonyms of ojus like thejas, veera, manyu, sahas, varchas etc., have been mentioned. All this term indicates the power, strength and energy of the body. We can find the word usage in other sciences like natyasastra, alankara sashtra, Jyothi sashtra etc. In different branches of science, the word is used with a different meanings. Ultimately,

the ojus stands for ultimate purity, brightness, and unctuousness in all these sciences.

Definition of ojus

When we are going through the definition of ojus, acharya Charaka explained it as the first Sara in garbhavastha ¹, the essence of garbha rasa and prakrtha Kapha, Sushruta acharya considered it as equivalent to bala of an individual. Acharya Bhavamisra has mentioned ojus as the snigdhamsa of all the dhathus. Acharya Indu described it as pradhana dhathu, but acharya Sharangadhara explained it as upadhathu. Where acharya Vagbhata considered ojus as dhathumala, here in definition, we can see different versions in descriptions of various authors on other aspects of ojus. Also, we can see the differences in opinion, so this is needed to be analysed for better understanding.

Survey Questionnaire

For this purpose, an online survey using google form was conducted related to the concept of ojus among the postgraduate scholars in VPSV Ayurveda College, Kottakkal, Kerala, India. The survey collected opinions and aimed to examine the respondent's knowledge and attitude toward the concept. The questionnaire comprised open-ended questions of 22 questions; the first five were to collect respondents' personal information, and the following 16 questions were gathered concerning the common doubts and confusions about ojus. The questions were,

- Ojus has a Soumya bhava/Thajisa bhava/ both?
- Do you agree on the classification of ojus to para & Apara?
- According to you, where is the exact site of ojus?
- Is it a dravya / adravya?

- How would you understand the ojus, as sara/as mala/upadhathu?
- Do you think ojus and bala are the same?
- Which concept is closely related to immunity? Ojus/bala/vyadhikshamatwa?
- Are you using the concept of ojus in your practice?
- Is it quantifiable?
- Is it tangible/intangible?
- Is it sookshma / sthoola?
- Which among the following is your opinion about the concept of ojus? physical/physiological/psychological?
- There are textbook references about the colour of ojus; do you agree with this?
- Acharya Charaka explained the unique qualities of ojus, colour as ghee, taste as honey and smell as laaja. Do you agree with it?

Soumya and Thaijasa bhava of ojus

The first question was whether ojus has a Soumya bhava / thajasa bhava. 64% responded to it as Soumya bhava, 7% as thajasa bhava, and 18% as Soumya bhava and thajasa bhava. As Ayurveda accepts man as an epitome of the universe, it recognises the duality of the universe in man also as the universe shows this property in the form of prakrthi-Purusha, seetham-ushnam, njana –anjana etc. Ojus also will reflect this dual nature structurally and functionally; ojus can be divided into two; the gross form is somathmakam, the supreme essence of all dhathus called apra ojus, which constitute bala Swaroopa of ojus and responsible for the nourishment of each structural and functional element of the body, the other is thajasa Swaroopa or subtle form of ojus called para ojus which keeps on functioning as an active base for the gross factor, it keeps the proper strength of Agni in body and protects the body from ailments. We can assume that ojus has a soumyabhava and a thajasa bhava.

Para and Apra ojus

The next question was, do you agree on the classification of ojus to para and apra 63 % of all respondents said yes, 8% of respondents said no, and 21% responded as they have no opinion about this. Apra ojus exists in the body right from the period of embryonic development and functions as the nourishing factor of the embryo in its refined form as garbharassara. Its level increases during the 6th month; it then nourishes the dosha and dhathu if life exists. Acharya Charaka explains this expression of ojus as slaishmika ojus² due to its resemblance to the properties of Sushma. In its most purified form, the slaishmika bhava of the body can be called ojus or functionally bala. Acharya Vagbhata explains the same thing as rasathmaka ojus, which is carried by dasamoolasira and nourishes the whole body; the term rasathmaka is used to emphasise the presence of balaposhana bhava of apra ojus, thus from heart, it reaches all dhathus and malas. Then next is how the apra ojus is formed; Acharya Charaka has quoted a simile that just like a honey bee which collects nectar from different flowers, ojus is formed as a result of the collection of snehamsa from the prasada paka of all dhathus, even though the flowers are diverse the quality of honey remains the same likewise ojus is formed from saphadhathus³. The seven dhathus are different structurally and functionally, but the ojus possess the same level of purity and clarity in their refined state. Acharya Sushruta also explains this with another example: the ojus is transformed from sareera dhathu as the ghee separates from milk. Here, one important thing is to be mentioned for getting separated in this way agnipaka is necessary, indicating the role of thajasa bhava, i.e., dhatwagni.

The process of dhatupaka can be explained as the rasathmaka ojus being first separated from food due to the action of jadaragni. It is then converted to rakttha by rasa dathwagni. The sara formed in this process contributes to ojus; likewise, in each stage of dhatwagni paka, the ojus gains its contribution from corresponding dhathu. Finally, the sara of sukra dhathu is transformed into ojus due to sukra dhatwagni; likewise, in each stage of dhatwagni paka, the ojus gains its contribution from corresponding dhathu and this cyclic process carried throughout the life, until the body exists in healthy condition. i.e., the essence of all dhathus after entering hrdaya will get mixed with rasa viksepana karma of vyana vayu will help the dhathus which are in the form of rasa, to reach the dasa dhamanis and from there it will be taken throughout the body on reaching the target ojus will ooze out to enter into siras.

Next is the para ojus⁴, the other bhava of ojus is sookshma bhava; it holds subtle form in the body, and this type of existence is closely related to prana mayakosha. Panchavayu and indriya panchakka constitutes the pranamayakosha and can be emphasised with the help of meemamsa. This form of ojus can be considered very difficult to detect anatomically in sthoola sareera. It is so related to the existence of life that it enters the body right from conception.

It is the thajasa bhava of ojus. We can see ojus and thejas are used simultaneously in our classics, and the para ojus can be the karana of sleishmika ojus in our body. Acharya bhela states that a person will become ojuswi (possessing a sound level of apra ojus) only when he is with proper thejus (the nourishing factor or prasada bhava in the body). The next thing is sadaka pitta can be considered one of the significant manifestations of para ojus as it is situated in hrdaya, which is responsible for abhiprethartha sadanath. This idea is reflected in the statement mentioning sadhaka pitta as a karana for ojus by dalhana. It is the same thejo bhava of ojus that spreads out through the skin luminously in the form of Chaya and prabha (brajaka pitta). Chaya can only be perceived closely, whereas prabha can be perceived as a lusture even from a distance and duschaya is described among the ojokshaya lakshana by vagbhata. From these explanations, we can understand that ojus has two types para and apra.

Site of ojus

According to you, the next question was where is the exact site of ojus. In response to this question, 45 % responded as throughout the body, and 47% said both heart and throughout the body, and some of the respondents said it as in the heart. The seat of apra ojus is explained by acharya Chakrapani Datta as the dasdhamani, in Ashtanga Hridaya Vagbhata explains it as dasmoolasira, which starts from hrdaya, branches and spread throughout the body and nourishes the body through their branches pervading in saptha dhathus. According to Bhel acharya seat of apra can be considered as 12⁵; this means the ojus exists in each part of the body; here, we can see that vata is omitted that is more inclined to the prana sakthi, for which the para ojus acts as the transit for its manifestation and also even pureesha is considered as one of the seats of apra ojus it means that apra ojus exists in all the srothas and srothodusti will first reflect in apra ojus.

Acharya Charaka mentions ten seats of prana, and Acharya Chakrapani Dutta states that even though the prana or factor of life exists in all parts of the body, the injury that happens to any of these parts may greatly affect the existence of prana; these can be considered as seats of ten divisions of prana explained in utharameemamsa among these ten divisions, ojus can be regarded as the seat of dhananjaya vayu the function of which is jeevana and poshana and its also given that dhananjaya is the prana that

finally leaves the body, during the death of an individual. Thus life ends when prana leaves its seat ojus. The seat of para ojus is explained by acharya Charaka as hrdaya.

Ojus as Dravya

The next question is Whether ojus is a dravya or adravya; 62% responded as adravya and 30 % as dravya. In Ayurveda, certain dravyas are quoted as avyaktha; an excellent example is that we can understand or infer vatha by its karmas. Its prathyaksha is not possible. In the case of such dravyas, any description regarding varna, pramana, and gandha are not available in ayurvedic classics. Ojus has guna and karma, so it must be a dravya. Another example is manas. Manas is also considered a dravya because it has guna and karma.

Ojus as Sara or Upadhathu or Dhathumala

To the next question, how would you understand the ojus, as sara or upadhathu or dhathu mala? The majority of the respondents, i.e. 64 %, responded as they understand ojus as sara, 20% as upadhathu, and 18% have no opinion about this. Some authors consider ojus as mala; some think it saptha dhathu sara, and others believe it as upadhathu. Acharya Charaka explained ojus as aadi sara of garbha.

Acharya Chakrapani comments on it as before garbha ulpathi ojus is in the form of sara of sukra and sonitha. After sukra sonitha samyoga ojus is in the state of garbha sara, after manifestation of hrdaya in garbha, ojus acquires its position in garbha hrdaya and performs its function. Acharya Hemadri opines, at sukra sonitha samyoga garbha and ojus are formed here the word kitta/mala is used to show its inferiority from garbha.

Next is ojus as sara; when ojus is compared with rasadi dhathus, ojus has been considered more saaratha than other dhathu. Another opinion is ojus is the purest form; hence it does not have a mala, so it is regarded as the sara bhaga of all dhathus. While considering ojus, it does the function of deha dharana only, but the poshana function is not undertaken by ojus in any form. So it is regarded as upadhathu. In the description of 18 kshayas by Acharya Charaka, kshayas of doshas, dhathus and malas and after these, ojukshaya is quoted separately, which signifies that ojus is a separate entity from these dosha dhathu and malas.

Ojus and Bala

The next question is, Do you think ojus and bala are the same? Half of the respondents say bala and ojus are not the same 40 % responded as bala and ojus are the same 10 % do not have an opinion about this. The word bala has a different meaning in the various ayurvedic treatises; Acharya Charaka, Vagbhata and Kashyapa consider bala as karmakarana shakthi, i.e., the ability to perform physical and mental activities there for acharya Charaka states that the bala should be assessed by vyayama sakthi. Sahaja bala is - which is attained inborn by an individual (this type of bala is influenced by the purity of beej). Kalaja bala is a type of bala achieved due to climate changes. Yukthikrtha bala- is one can maintain through proper ahara, vihara and oushadha⁶.

Acharya Sushruta has given the appropriate functions of ojus in our body; he used the term bala. Ojus or bala is the factor that reflects the nourishment and built of a person structurally and sensory and motor function functionally. Without proper bala, a person neither will have adequate food nor will be able to communicate.

Ojus and vyadhikshamatwa

Next is vyadhikshamatwa and ojus. The term vyadhikshamatwa is mentioned by acharya Charaka about explanations of apathyahara. Acharya says all persons exposed to apathyahara will not develop the disease; this is because of the factor vyadhikshamatwa, which is different in different persons⁷. Vyadhikshamatwa is always proportional to bala. Where bala is a functional entity is karya and ojas is karana for it so that we can say that vyadhikshamatwa is a function of ojus. It can be attained by maintaining ojusudhi for both Soumya and thajasa bhava of ojus and purifying ojus each time it is tarnished due to apathyahara vihara, kalaprabhava, abhigatha, vyayama etc. The nature of ahara that Maintains ojusudhi is hrdayam, ojasyam and srothosudhikaram. As ojus is explained as hrdayasthitham, hrdaya dravya should be used to maintain the health and purity of ojus. They will nourish the thajasa bhava of ojus. Ojasyam- includes balya and jeevaneeya group of drugs; they are all seethaveerya drugs and nourish somathmaka ojus. Srothosudhikaram includes mainly vayasthapana and Rasayana groups of drugs. Srothosodhana is the main objective of the Rasayana and vayasthapana group of drugs that feeds the thajasa bhava of ojus. The proper maintenance of ahara, nidra and abrahmacharya /brahmacharya, proper dinacharya and rithucharya practices, kalika sodhana etc., are essential for the maintenance of purity of ojus.

Ojus and immunity

The next question is, which concept is closely related to immunity? Ojus or bala or vyadhikshamatwa? The majority of the participants responded to it as vyadhikshamatwa, 24 % as ojus and 17 % as bala. The concept of immunity is broad in Ayurveda. Bala is much more than immunity and includes even physical and mental strength...all protective mechanisms that help reduce an individual's vulnerability to all possible assaults Are known as bala, so immunity is one of the meanings of bala. Ojus is responsible for resistance against diseases, and in the absence of ojus, there will be death; so, ojus is also a very similar concept to immunity. And vyadhikshamatwa is the ability to resist the severity of disease and the power to prevent the onset of illness.

Concept of ojus in clinical practice

Moving to the next question, are you currently using the concept of ojus in your practice 44% of the respondents are using the idea, 46% responded as they are not using the idea and 8% have no opinion about it. Acharya Sushruta has explained three modes of vitiation of ojas or ojavikrthi as thrayobala doshas. Ojovisramsas, ojoyapath and oja kshaya⁸. Even though they are presented as the types of ojavikrthi, they look like the stages of ojakshaya. The first stage is impairment of the distribution of ojus to the dhathus, then change in or modification of the natural properties of ojus and finally loss and wasting of ojus. Visramsas means displacement from its usual place. Oja visramsas lakshana includes sandhi vislesha, gatra sada, dosha chyavana and kriya saniirodha. Doshachyavana means expulsion of doshas from their respective locations and impairment in function. Oja mix with rasa dhathu in hrdaya, and from there, it circulates throughout the body via srothas. In ojo visramsas circulating ojus leak out from tiny distributing channels. As a result, vital ojus does not reach certain organs or parts of the body and thus leads to symptoms of ojo visramsas.

Ojo vyapath means ojus gets vitiated by dusta doshas and dushya; in pathological conditions, ojus loses its normal physiological function and properties, thus producing ojo vyapath. According to Sushruta acharya ojakshaya lakshanas are murcha,

mamsakshaya, pralapa and marana. Causes of ojokshaya are athivyayama, anashana, chintha, pramithasana, vatha athapa sevana, bhaya, kopa etc.

Various pathological conditions with ojudushti

Ojus plays a vital role in the genesis of various disorders like rajayakshma, pandu, prameha, sosha and madathyaya. In rajayakshma, the depletion of oja occurs. Due to the obstruction of srotas, nutrients are deficient to raktadi dhathus, lowered functioning of dhatwagnis and catabolic events, the food ingested, which undergoes pachana in the kosta is changed into malas, ultimately poshan of ojas declines thus ojokshaya occurs. In shosha roga, severe dryness or extreme depletion of tissues will lead to loss of ojas. Ojameha is a type of prameha and a synonym of prameha⁹. Vatha, by its ruksha guna, changes the ojus, which is madhura in nature, into Kashaya and transports it to mutrasaya leading to the causation of madhumeha. Ojus produced in this condition is qualitatively deficient; even the impoverished ojus is lost from the body through urine. Due to excessive exacerbation of three doshas, especially pitta afflicts dhatus. As a result, varna, bala and ojas get reduced, leading to the development of pandu roga¹⁰. In pandu roga sadhaka pitta, which is responsible for the production of ojas, is affected. There occurs a reduction in gunas of ojus along with the removal of varna, bala and Sneha. The person becomes Nissara, sithilendriya and vaivarnya. Theekshnadi gunas of madya directly affect ojas, and different stages such as ojoavihata, alpavihatijas and athartham vihatijas are explained in madathyaya¹¹. In many other contexts, scattered references of ojokshaya and its other forms are available, for example, ksheena ojus as vataja kasa lakshana, oja praksharana in Sneha vyapath, oja kshaya in athilangitha purusha lakshana, and ojo asthiratha in astama masa garbhini avastha etc. can be seen.

Measures to increase ojus

Ojovrdhi does not cause any disease as it is the purest and rarest component in the body. Symptoms of ojovrdhi are tushti, Pushti of deha and exaltation of bala, a proper increase of these entities takes place by ojovrdhi. Ojovrdhi is attained when the individual practices intake of hitha and pathya aharas, doshas and the agnis function at an optimum level, dhathus are well-formed, and srothas are intact. A heightened state of ojus indicates the increase of vyadhikshamatwa shakti. Measures to increase ojus are protecting ojus, purifying ojus and increasing the purity and level of ojus. In brhathrayi sutrasthana, chapters deal with the ways to preserve the purity of ojus through dinacharya, rithucharya, samyakvegapravarthana, pratyahara vihara etc. In chikitsa sthana is described as the purity of malabhava of ojus that cause disease through deepana, pachana, sodhana etc. Then grthapana, rasayana seva, etc., to prevent the disease's reoccurrence. Rasayana vidhi is to non-diseased persons to protect and improve the quality of ojus, and vajeekarana vidhi provides the ultimate purity of ojus for the progeny and reinstate the quality of ojus lost through sexual activities.

Ojo pareeksha involves three steps, assessment of the function of prana in the body by analysing the manifestation of five divisions of prana, then assessment of the process of thajiasabhava of ojus and slaishmika bhava evaluation or Soumya bhava of ojus. As the vatha in the body represents the unstable form of prana in the universe, the pitta represents the thajiasa bhava, and the kapha represents the somathmaka bhava.

Quantity of ojus

The next question is, is it quantifiable, or can we quantify the ojus? The majority of the respondents say that ojus is not

quantifiable and 20 % say it is possible, and 12 % don't have an opinion. According to Charaka and Vagbhata, the quantity of para ojus in the body is ardhha Anjali¹². The amount of para ojus is asta bindu¹³, and even a slight decrease will cause the person's death. It gives comparative knowledge of the quantity of para and para ojus. Still, the quantity of ojus is a controversial thing. Even though acharya mentioned its quantity, it cannot be practically dissociated. As ojus is the structural and functional basis of the existence of life, it functionally inclines more toward protein and its metabolism in our body; considering the structural properties of ojus plasma proteins can be correlated to the concept of ojus, its quantity given by acharya is ardhhanjali that is approximately (100-120gms). Plasma protein concentration in a healthy person is about 6-8 gm / 100ml, i.e., 120-160 gm.

The next question is, which among the following is your opinion about the concept of ojus? The majority responded to it as a physiological concept; physical means structural, and physiological means functional. Among the dual expression of ojus, Soumya bhava of ojus, due to its specific properties, is more related to the mind; Mind is nourished with indriyarthas along with which ojus is nourished; therefore, any derangements in this nourishment of mind will affect the proper level of ojus in its manasika bhava and vice versa. And there can be seen many psychiatric symptoms in ojokshaya, and the higher state of this derangement can be seen in apasmara and unmada. The involvement of ojus is evident in the aetiology of these diseases mentioned by Acharya Charaka. As the flow of manasika doshas is through hrdaya and manovahasrothas, where hrdaya is the seat of ojus, there for the involvement of ojus in these diseases is inevitable. So, the concept of ojus can be considered a physiological and psychological concept.

The following four questions are almost similar. That is, whether ojus is sookshma or sthoola. The majority responded as sookshma. In your opinion, is it tangible or intangible 60 % responded it is intangible. There are textbook references about the colour of ojus, do you agree with it? About 47 % do not agree with it, 27 % agree with the question 27% don't have an opinion about it. Acharya Charaka explained the unique qualities of ojus as colour as ghee, taste as honey and odour as laaja. Do you agree with it? Interestingly, 40 % don't have an opinion about it and 38 % say they disagree with it. Considering the structural properties of ojus plasma proteins can be correlated to the concept of ojus. Plasma proteins show a yellow colour when separated like grtha varna, and also some conjugated derivatives of plasma proteins like glycoprotein are sweet like madhura rasa of ojus. And the other thing we can correlate is these properties can detect in urine in advanced stages of madhumeha.

DISCUSSION

The survey result provides some of the first data about the knowledge and attitude toward the concept of ojus. The overall effect from this survey has shown that the respondents have much clarity in the areas like the classification of ojus, sthana etc. and don't have much transparency in some areas like that of dual nature of ojus and ojus as a dravya and majority doesn't have an opinion about the colour, smell and taste of ojus.

There is no point in life from womb to tomb where ojus is not playing a significant role. To explain the manifestation of triguna, sankhya darsana gives the example of an enlightened lamp; the same can be brought to explain the existence of vital force manifesting through body elements. Here we can see the flame of the enlightening lamp and a wick bathed in oil; the wick stands for the gross body of dhathus, the unctuous element oil represents the slaishmika bhava of ojus, and the flame represents thajiasa

bhava of ojus and prana. Here it is implied that the thajasa bhava is dormant in the unctuous element, and only the transformation happens. The flame gives light –the manifestation of prana or satva is the end effect. Likewise, the vital strength or bala is the effect of ojus in our body. The scholars have debated this from acharya chakrapani, but none of this description fits into the detailed and comprehensive discussion of ojus. Ojus, the factor of supreme purity, can be considered to possess dual expressions in our body. Further, literary, experimental, and clinical research are essential to know the truth extensively.

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