

Oja and Dhatu Poshana Nyaya: Functional Insights and Practical Applications

**Dr. Shamama Firdaus¹, Dr. Yasmeen Parveen²,
Dr. Archana Dnyaneshwar Rohankar³**

¹Assistant Professor, Kriya Sharir, Datta Meghe Ayurved Medical College, Wanadongari

²Assistant Professor, Roga nidan evam vikriti Vigyan, chhattisgarh ayurved medical College and hospital manki, Rajnandgaon

³Assistant Professor, Ayurved Samhita Siddhant, Datta Meghe Ayurved Medical College, Wanadongari

Abstract

Oja is described in Ayurveda as the supreme essence of all Dhatus and the foundation of Bala (strength).¹ Vyadhikshamatva and vitality.² Dhatu Poshana Nyaya explains the physiological principles governing tissue nourishment and transformation.³ Despite its central role in Ayurvedic physiology, Oja remains largely conceptual and qualitative in classical texts. This article expands the functional interpretation of Oja through Dhatu Poshana Nyaya. By integrating classical references from the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya with modern scientific understanding, Oja can be understood as a sign of overall body balance, proper metabolism, and strong immunity.

This study focuses on practical applications in preventive health, Rasayana therapy, and integrative clinical practice, emphasizing that maintaining Oja through a balanced diet, lifestyle adjustments, and Rasayana treatments can boost immunity, stabilize metabolism, and enhance overall physiological resilience in modern healthcare settings.

Keywords: Oja, Dhatu Poshana Nyaya, Vyadhikshamatva, Systems Biology, Integrative Physiology

1. Introduction

In Ayurveda, the human body is formed by Doshadhatumalamoolam-hi -Shariram⁴. Dhatus serve as the structural and functional elements, while Oja is their ultimate refined essence. रसादीनां शुक्रान्तानां धातूनां यत् परं तेज- Oja is the essence of all Dhatus.⁵ Similarly, it characterizes Oja as the vital sustaining factor of life.⁶ Despite its central role, Oja is largely qualitative in classical texts. Modern biomedical research focuses on measurable physiological markers. Bridging this gap requires a functional reinterpretation based on Dhatu Poshana Nyaya.

The nourishment from Aahar-Vihar and Aushadh affects the Dhatu Iirman.⁷ Ayurveda describes seven types of Dhatu and their sub-tissue (Updhatu). There is also a description of their kshaya (depletion) and vradhhi (enhancement), which follows another theory of samaanya-vishesha-sidhhanta.⁸ Dhatu Poshana Nyaya are explained in Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya. These Nyayas explain how nutrients from **Ahāra Rasa** nourish the **seven Dhatus** (Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja, Shukra).⁹ Under Cell physiology, digestion, absorption, metabolism, energy transformation, and tissue nutrition can be correlated with Dhatu Poshan Sidhhant.¹⁰ This review may help open the door to future

research areas in the field of the reverse scientific approach of Ayurveda, in the context of Dhatu Poshan Siddhanta.

Aim: To functionally correlate the concept of Oja with Dhatu Poshana Nyaya and to explore its significance in preventive and integrative healthcare.

Objectives

- To study classical references that describe Oja and Dhatu Poshana Nyaya in major Ayurvedic literature.
- To Study Dhatu Poshana Nyaya in Relation to Oja: Functional Insights
- To understand the relevance of Oja preservation in Preventive health strategies.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Design- Conceptual review.

3. Classical Conceptual Framework

3.1 Nature and Types of Oja

Acharya Charaka illustrates how Oja accumulates in the body: Just as bees gather nectar from fruits and flowers to produce honey, the inherent qualities within the human body collect Oja through their activities. Essentially, when the essence of food (Ahaar rasa) undergoes the process of nourishing tissues (dhaatu paak), Oja is generated in its purest form as an essence during the development of each tissue (dhaatu).¹¹

Responsibility of Oja`

According to Acharya Charaka, Oja represents the body's intrinsic strength, enabling it to fend off illnesses. A reduction in Oja leaves the body susceptible to various diseases and leads to its eventual decline. Acharya Sushruta explains that Oja plays a role in maintaining, nourishing, and developing muscle tissue. It ensures the seamless operation of all physical, mental, and verbal functions without hindrance. Additionally, it improves the quality of voice and speech, as well as the performance of both external (motor organs, sensory organs) and internal. (Cognitive function and consciousness)¹²

Disturbance or Disorders of Oja

There are three types of Oja disorders (Vikriti): Vyapad, Vistransa, and Kshaya.¹³

Disorders	Meaning	Lakshanas (Symptoms / Features)
विस्त्रंस (Vistransa)	Refers to the spreading or extension of a disease or pathological condition from its original site.	1. Joint instability 2. Generalized muscle weakness/fatigue 3. Physiological imbalance 4. Functional impairment
व्यापद (Vyapad)	Indicates invasion or penetration of disease into deeper tissues or systems.	1. Muscle stiffness 2. Edema 3. General fatigue 4. Lethargy 5. Hypersomnia
क्षय (Kshaya)	Refers to depletion, wasting, or reduction of tissues and strength, often due to chronic disease.	1. Syncope 2. Muscle wasting 3. Altered mental status 4. Delirium 5. Death due to severe systemic failure

Measurement (Praman) and Classification of Oja

According to Acharya Chakrapani, Oja is of two types: Para Oja and Apar Oja.

1. Para Oja, or Higher Oja, is located in the heart and relies on Prana, the vital life force. It is traditionally measured as eight bindu.
2. Apar Oja, or Lower Oja, is associated with the heart's arteries and is traditionally measured as half an Anjali. In the case of Madhumeha (diabetes), this Oja becomes imbalanced and is expelled through urine.¹⁴

Tissue Nutrition Ayurveda Perspective

सप्तभिर्देहधातारो धातवो द्विविधं पुनः।

यथास्वमग्निभिः पाकं यान्ति किट्टप्रसादवत् ॥१५॥¹⁵

Additionally, during metabolism, the Dhatus that support the body are transformed in two ways: into waste and essence, having been acted upon by one of the seven Agnis.¹⁶ In Ayurvedic metabolism, there are three fundamental processes: Rasa (nutrient effect), Agni (digestion and metabolism), and Srotas (microcirculation and tissue perfusion). When the essence of digested and absorbed food or medicine reaches the corresponding Dhātu (tissues), it nourishes them, enabling them to function optimally. Ayurveda describes the sequential development of various Dhatus, such as "Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja, and Shukra." These Dhatus evolve in order and support the nourishment of subsequent Dhatus. For instance, Rakta dhatus are crucial in forming Mamsa, which in turn nourishes Meda. The efficient operation of all seven units forms an eighth unit called "OJA," regarded as the ultimate refinement and the supreme essence that sustains life.¹⁷

3.2 Dhātu Poshana Nyaya in Relation to Oja: Functional Insights

Ayurveda describes four important principles of tissue nourishment:

1. Ksheera-Dadhi Nyaya (Law of Transformation)

According to this Nyaya, the one Dhātu transforms into the other successive Dhātu just as the milk transforms into the curd, so is the term "Ksheera Dadhi Nyaya." So this one's about how tissues transform step by step, where each Dhātu nourishes and becomes the next one- Rasa becomes Rakta, Rakta becomes Mamsa, and it keeps going. Kind of like how milk turns into curd. The whole thing hinges on whether your Dhatvagni is strong enough. Proper metabolic transformation ensures qualitative Dhātu formation, ultimately leading to the production of Oja. If Agni is weak, Dhātu formation becomes defective, affecting Oja; also, when the previous Dhātu properly acts as a substratum for the next Dhātu, the entire Dhātu-poshana chain remains intact, resulting in optimal formation of Oja. Any disturbance in this chain will ultimately affect Oja quantity and quality, leading to reduced vitality and immunity.

2. Kedari-Kulya Nyaya (Irrigation Theory)

According to this theory, the process of nourishment of tissues can be compared to the irrigation of different fields by water from a canal. Crops in a field get irrigated by creating Kuliya (drains) and Kedar (small pieces of land). The Kedar (small pieces of land) get irrigated one by one through Kuliya (drains) in sequence. This compares tissue nourishment to how you'd water fields through a channel system. Nutrients (Ahara Rasa) move through the Srotas and nourish the Dhatus one after another. In modern terms, this resembles microcirculation and tissue perfusion. Proper nutrient transport is essential for maintaining Dhātu integrity and thereby sustaining Oja.¹⁸

3. Khale- Kapota Nyaya (Selective Uptake Theory)

This explains selective absorption. Basically, each tissue picks out the specific nutrients it actually needs, the way a bird would pick certain grains from a pile. For example, bone tissue selectively absorbs amino

acids and minerals such as calcium and phosphorus, whereas blood tissue specifically takes in nutrients like iron, which are essential for blood formation.¹⁹ Sounds a lot like how cells selectively take in stuff in modern physiology. When this uptake works well, you get healthy Dhatus and better Oja.

4. Ek Kala Dhatu Poshana Nyaya (Simultaneous Nourishment Theory)

This says all Dhatus get fed by circulating Rasa at the same time. According to Acharya Charaka, the nutrient homology of Dhatus is circulating in the body continuously like a rotating wheel.²⁰ Acharya Sushruta states that rasa is derived from food within a single day. This circulating fluid, known as rasa Dhatu, carries nutrients and remains in each of the subsequent six dhatus for 3015 kalas each. Consequently, it takes a month for Rasa to transform into Shukra in men and Artava in women. The entire process of converting rasa into the seven Dhatus spans 18090 kalas.²¹ As per the aforementioned details, rasa resides in each Dhatu for five days, and the nourishment of the Dhatus is completed in a month, culminating in the nourishment of shukra. Here we can think of that in terms of systemic circulation and the constant metabolic stuff that keeps tissues balanced. Good Agni speeds this up; weak Agni slows it down. This concept highlights the importance of holistic nourishment and the interconnection between different bodily tissues, underscoring that dysfunction or deficiency in one dhatu can affect the subsequent tissues.

Interpretation in Relation to Oja

All four Nyayas collectively explain that:

- Digestion and metabolism are working properly
- Circulation moving smoothly through the Srotas
- Tissues taking in what they specifically need
- Continuous nourishment happening throughout your whole system

All of that's what you need for Dhatus to form the right way. When these processes function optimally, the refined essence produced is Oja. It's about metabolic quality, how your immune system holds up, and how stable you are overall. Any disturbance in Dhatu Poshana directly affects Oja and consequently reduces strength and resistance to disease.

Oja and Dhatu Poshan Nyaya- Practical Applications

Practical application involves:

Assessing individual digestive capacity (Agni) to ensure optimal transformation and nourishment. Tailoring diet and herbal formulations to support specific Dhatus based on imbalances. Using rejuvenative therapies (Rasayana) to enhance Oja and Dhatu quality. Ensuring proper elimination and channel cleansing to facilitate nutrient distribution. Monitoring lifestyle factors that affect Oja and Dhatu health, such as sleep, stress, and exercise. This integrated approach ensures tissue integrity, immunity, and vitality.

Conclusion

Oja represents the vital essence of all Dhatus and plays a central role in maintaining vitality, immunity, and overall well-being. The concept of Dhatu Poshana Nyaya explains the mechanism of tissue nourishment through various models such as Ksheera-Dadhi, Kedari-Kulya, Khale-Kapota, and Eka-Kala Nyaya. These principles illustrate how proper transformation and distribution of nutrients ensure the healthy formation of successive Dhatus, ultimately leading to the production and preservation of Oja.

The functional correlation between Dhatu nourishment and Oja highlights that any disturbance in the process of Dhatu Poshana may lead to depletion or imbalance of Oja, thereby affecting immunity and systemic stability. Therefore, maintaining proper Ahara (diet), Vihara (lifestyle), and balanced Agni is essential for sustaining the Dhatu-poshana process and protecting Oja.

Thus, preservation of Oja through proper Dhatu nourishment can serve as an important strategy in preventive medicine and integrative health practices.

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