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A Systematic Review of the Concept of *Ojas* in *Āyurveda* and Its Parallels in Traditional Medical Systems

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Abstract:

In Ayurvedic medicine, *Ojas* is regarded as the essence of life energy, immunity, and vitality. It is the most refined by-product of digestion and metabolism, representing the culmination of the Seven *Dhātus* (tissues). *Ojas* serves as a protective shield, maintaining physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. This paper explores the concept of *Ojas* in *Āyurveda*, its production, maintenance, and signs of imbalance, while drawing parallels with similar vital substances in other traditional medical systems such as Siddha, Unani, Tibetan, and Han Chinese medicine. The study highlights the universal recognition of a vital essence across traditional medical systems and cultures, emphasising its role in health, longevity, and holistic well-being.

Keywords: *Ojas*, *Āyurveda*, Seven *Dhātus*, Vital Essence, Traditional Medicine, Holistic Health

INTRODUCTION

Ojas (ओजस), a cornerstone of Ayurvedic medicine, is considered the body's essential life energy and immunity reserve. It is understood or believed to be a subtle essence that circulates throughout the body and protects against disease and aging.

Ojas is derived from the Seven *Dhātus* (सप्त धातु) and functions as a protective shield and is integral to vitality, resilience, and overall health, offering protection against disease, stress, tension, and aging. It is closely linked to mental, emotional and spiritual well-being, fostering states of contentment, happiness, and spiritual clarity.

SCOPE

This short paper offers a scholarly exploration of *Ojas* and its transcultural significance. It aims to elucidate the concept of *Ojas* in *Āyurveda* and examine its analogues in other traditional medical systems.

OJAS IN ĀYURVEDA

Ojas is the refined essence of the Seven *Dhātus*, representing the pinnacle of digestion and metabolism. These seven *Dhātus* are

- *Rasa* (रस): Plasma – It helps in transportation of nutrients, hormones, proteins etc.
- *Rakta* (रक्त): Blood – It helps in circulation of oxygen
- *Mamsā* (ममसा): Muscle – It covers all organs and provides stability and power to the body
- *Medā* (मेदा): Fat – It stores reserve energy
- *Asthi* (अस्थि): Bone – It provides basic structure and strength
- *Majjā* (मज्जा): Marrow – It provides nourishment to the nervous system (including brain and spinal cord)
- *Shukra* (शुक्र): Reproductive Tissue – It nourishes the reproductive strengths

All the Seven *Dhātus* are inter-connected and the malfunctioning of a single *Dhātu* can have an impact on all the other *Dhātus*, and, in turn, on *Ojas*. Depletion or imbalance of *Ojas* manifests as

- fatigue
- weakness
- susceptibility to illness
- lack of vitality
- mental-emotional foggy
- lack of spirit

The production and maintenance of *Ojas* relies on

- balanced and healthy diet
- proper digestion
- adequate rest
- harmonious & wholesome lifestyle

Therefore, Ayurvedic treatments focus on restoring *Ojas* through

- dietary interventions
- lifestyle modifications
- natural remedies
- rejuvenation therapies

OJAS AND CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE

Ojas functions as a protective shield, safeguarding the body from illness and promoting longevity. It is closely linked to mental, emotional and spiritual well-being, fostering states of contentment, happiness, and spiritual clarity. In conventional medicine there is no direct equivalent to the concept of *Ojas*. However, parallels can be drawn to

- immune system functions
- energy reserves in the body
- overall vitality regulated by physiological processes.

Conventional medical science groups the organs of the body into various organ systems. Each organ system performs a specific function in the body. The Seven *Dhātus* and their equivalent (though not necessarily the same) organ system are

- *Rasa*: circulatory system
- *Rakta*: respiratory system
- *Mamsā*: muscular system
- *Medā*: digestive system
- *Asthi*: skeletal system
- *Majjā*: nervous system
- *Shukra*: reproductive system

PARALLELS IN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE SYSTEMS

While *Āyurveda* uniquely conceptualises *Ojas*, similar notions of a vital essence exist in other traditional medical systems:

- **Siddha Medicine:** The concept of Oordhvam or Ooragam represents the body's essence, responsible for vitality and immunity.
- **Unani Medicine:** Quwwat-e-Mudabbira (Vis Medicatrix Naturae) embodies the body's inherent healing and self-regulatory mechanisms.
- **Tibetan Buddhist Medicine:** Nyingpo or Jing is the fundamental life force associated with longevity and spiritual development.
- **Tibetan Bon Medicine:** Thigle is the subtle essence of the body and mind, vital for clarity and well-being.
- **Han Chinese Medicine:** Essence (Jing), one of the Three Treasures alongside Qi (Vital Force) and Shen (Mind), is the foundation of growth, development, and vitality.

DISCUSSION

«From an early age, I was trained in ancient druid lore, which promotes the cultivation of honorable connections and relationships with the physical, energetic, and spiritual landscapes—flora, fauna, the kingdom of fungi, lichen, algae, bodies of water, landforms, and diverse human beings of the world—as well as with nature deities and spirits of nature. In my late teens and throughout early and late adulthood, I was trained in Vedic Aryan lore while living in Bharat, or India, for many years. This training emphasised spiritual disciplines such as yoga, mantra repetition, meditation, pranayama, martial arts, sacred sexuality or tantra, and the ceremonial use of entheogens.»

«My unique blend of druidic and Vedic Aryan knowledge along with formal education in clinical medicine, psychology, and psychiatry positioned me as a bridge between ancient wisdom and modern spirituality, exploring intersections such as nature and ecology, spiritual practices, holistic understanding of the self, cosmology, mythology and symbolism, and healing modalities fostered a deeper understanding of spirituality, nature, and the interconnectedness of all life.»

The concept of *Ojas* in *Āyurveda* and its analogues in other traditional medical systems underscore the universal recognition of a vital essence essential for health and well-being. While these systems differ in traditional medical terminology and cultural context, they converge on the importance of nurturing this essence through healthy diet, lifestyle, and spiritual practices offering insights into how individuals can live in harmony with themselves, each other, and the planet, including all animate and inanimate beings.

CONCLUSION

Ojas, as the essence of life energy in *Āyurveda*, plays a pivotal role in maintaining health, vitality, and resilience. Its parallels in Siddha, Unani, Tibetan, and Han Chinese medicine highlight a shared understanding across traditional medical systems and cultures. By integrating traditional medical wisdom with contemporary, conventional science, we can deepen our understanding of holistic health and well-being.

Brief Profile of the Author:

“**Dr Andrew Maclean Pagon MD PhD** is a Senior Consultant GP and Psychiatrist, specialising in holistic medicine and psychiatry, entheogenic psychotherapy, Vijaya or cannabis medicine, medical herbalism, and acupuncture. He is a full-time member of the Peruvian Psychiatric Association, Latin American Psychiatric Association, and World Psychiatric Association, and an International Member of the American Psychiatric Association (APA).”

“Dr. Maclean Pagon completed his medical training at the Tianjin International University of Modern and Traditional Medicine and Pharmacology, with clinical placements at Teaching Hospitals No.1 and No.2, and Tianjin Nankai Hospital of Integrated Medicine, earning an MBBS degree. He pursued a PhD in the History of Medicine at the Faculty of Medical Studies, Open University, Sri Lanka. Further research and clinical studies led to a Doctorate in Medicine (MD) and a Doctorate in Clinical Psychiatry, specialising in Integrated and Transcultural Psychiatry, at Tianjin Medical University, under the guidance of Academician Professor Dr. Wu Xian Zong, a WHO expert. His doctoral thesis was titled: "Somatisation of Mental-Emotional Distress: A Transcultural View."”

“Recently, he returned from a six-month trip to India (Bharat), where he continued integrating Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Tibetan Buddhist, and Tibetan shamanic medicines and spiritual practices into his personal and clinical work with patients. Currently, he operates a licensed clinical practice in holistic medicine and psychiatry in Miraflores, Lima, and Tarapoto, San Martín (Province), Peru.”

“He actively conducts field research on medicinal and entheogenic plants, mushrooms, lichens, and other natural medicines across Peru’s diverse regions, collaborating with university researchers in the Peruvian Amazon.”

Statements and Declaration: Some sections of this paper are also available in my profile which is uploaded on the website of the organisation that I am associated with (psaequilibrium.com). I have marked these common sections within quotation marks (« and »).

I also declare no conflict of interest. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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