



Review Article

THE IMPORTANCE OF SARA PAREEKSHA IN AYURVEDA - A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Sara concept is related with excellence of *Dhatu*s. Owing to the unending transformations or *Paka* taking place in the body, *Dhatu*s also differentiate in to *Sara bhaga* and *Kitta bhaga*, the ratio of which vary individually. As far as treatment is concerned *Sara pareeksha* is very important. The conceptual review of this *Sara*, its relationship with *Agni*, *Prakriti*, *Bala*, and how *Sara* is related with food intake etc. is done here. It is quite clear that inherent power of a person cannot be assessed by bulk and size of the body, but it is only judged by the *Sara* examination. Individuals on the basis of *Sara* have been classified into various categories depending upon the predominance and quality of particular *Dhatu* in the body, except the *Satva Sara* which is based on predominance of *Satva* (psychic factor) in the body. Examination of the *Sarata* of *Dhatu* is helpful for the preventive and curative aspect i.e. the *Dhatu* which is of weak quality in an individual, may be treated with good diet to increase the strength of that *Dhatu*. *Acharya Charaka* has also described that the individual having the excellence of all *Dhatu*s (*Sarva Sara*) have great strength, happiness, resistance to difficulties, self confidence in all enterprises, virtuous acts, and firm and well-built body, correct gait, resonant melodious and high pitched voice, happiness, power, wealth, enjoyment, honour, slowness of aging process, resistance to diseases, having more progeny and longevity. For determining the *Datusarata*, when the positive features are present above 60%, it will be considered as best quality (*Pravara sarata*). When the positive features are present between 59% and 50%, it will be considered as moderate tissue quality (*Madhyam Sarata*). When the positive features are present between 49 to 35%, it will be labelled as poor tissue quality (*Heena Sarata*).

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INTRODUCTION

Sara Pareeksha is well explained by many *Acharya*'s of *Ayurveda*. Since *Sara* is the essence of the *Dhatu*s, it should be assessed for its normal functions and abnormalities in diseased conditions. The excellent features of each *Dhatu* is manifested as *Sara* in each individual in the physiological as well as psychological level. Whenever there is a derangement of these *Dhatu*s the physiological functions is affected as well as psychological aspect of the individual is *Rasa Dhatu* affected. *Sara* concept is related with excellence of *dhatu*s^[1]. Owing to the unending transformations or *Paka* taking place in the body, *Dhatu*s also differentiate in to *Sara bhaga* and *Kitta bhaga*, the ratio of which vary individually. So even if every body is composed of *Sapta Dhatu*s its quantity and quality varies a lot. Which forms the basis of *Dhatu sara* concept.

While explaining about *Sara*, *Acharya* used *Twak sara* instead of *Rasa sara*. It is described as *Twak sara* probably due to the reason that the functions of are primarily and in a better extend manifested in the *Twak*. So by *Twak sara* the *rasa* residing in *Twak* is being considered. *Dhatu samya* is a stage characterized by absence of disease and harmonious function of *Dosha*

dhatu and *mala* with respect to *Sareera*, *Mana*, *Budhi*, and *Indriya*. While *Sarata* is an excellent stage of *Visudha dhatu* which stands much higher than *Dhatu samya*. Specific *Nidana* can easily alter the *Dhatu samya* condition while the *Dhatu sara* shows an increased power of resistance to disease. *Sara Pareeksha* is one among the *Dasavidha pareeksha* explained by *Acharya Caraka*. *Sara Pareeksha* is done for the sake of *Bala mana Vishesh jnanardham*.

Astanga Sangraha Sareera sthana, while explaining about *Sara*, mentioned about 8 types of *sara* in relation to *Twak*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja*, *Sukra* and *Satwa*^[2]. Each succeeding one better than its preceding one and helpful in determining the strength of the body.

Further the physician should not commit the mistakes of deciding any person as strong or weak by merely looking at the good healthy built or weak thin built of the body respectively as both of them might be otherwise as in the case of elephant and the lion. Separate explanation about each *Sara* is not available in *Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*. For the proper understanding of concept of *Sara*, the

knowledge regarding the *Gunas* (qualities), *Sthaana* (seats), and *Karma* (functions) of each *Dhatu* is necessary.

Agni and Saara

Human body is the confluence of somatic humours (*Doshas*), body tissues (*Dhatu*s) and waste products (*Malas*). Human body is in turn the outcome of food. Body tissues and somatic humors are also produced and nourished by nutrients present in food. There is a vast difference between physical and chemical properties of *Dhatu*s and those of food. Because of this, nutrients for each *Dhatu* (*dhatuposhakadravyas*) obtained from food are called *Vijateeyadravyas* and they must be transformed into *Sajateeyadravyas* before they are incorporated in the body. This is the function of *Pachakapitta* or *Agni* (digestive fire). Food ingested is acted upon by *Jataragni*. *Saara*/ nutrient portion of digested food after *Jataragnipaka* is subjected to *Bhootagnipaka* and *Kitta* portion is eliminated as urine and faeces. Transformation of *Vijateeya* components of food into *Sajateeya* components to be incorporated into structure of *Dhatu*s is the function of *Bhootagnis*. Nutrients transformed into homologous after action of *Bhootagni* are now acted upon by *Dhatwagnis* for nourishment and replenishment of *Dhatu*s. *Dhatu*s have two states in the body, *Poshaka dhatu* or that which nourishes and *Poshya dhatu* or that which is being nourished. One important function of *Rasa dhatu* is *Tushti*. In *Twaksaara*, the smooth and lustrous *Twak* with deep rooted hairs directly indicate the excellent function of *Rasa dhatu*. One important function of *Rakta* is *Varna prasdana*. *Rakta saara* persons have very good complexion. *Deha lepa* is main function of *Mamsa dhatu*. *Mamsa saara* persons have well developed muscles covering body parts. Contributing unctuousness is the main function of *Medas*, *Medo saara* persons have unctuousness skin and other body parts. *Deha urdhwata dharana* is main function of *Asthi dhatu*, *Asthi saara* persons have firm strong body. *Snehana* or unctuousness is function of *Majja dhatu* also. *Majja dhatu saara* persons have unctuousness in skin, voice etc. from the literary hints regarding *Saarata*. *Sukla dhatu* imparts happiness, strength and helps in reproduction. *Sukla saara* persons are happy, liked by females and rich in progeny. Though the qualities enumerated in *Satva saara lakshanas* are psychological entities, through *Satva saara pareeksha* the physician is indirectly assessing the quality of *Dhatu*s on which mind depends for its functions. Functioning of a sound mind will be evident only when those *Dhatu* elements concerned with functioning of mind are intact since mind cannot function without a *Panchabhoota* substrate. Thus, it could be assumed that *Saara* is the direct measurement of *Sthayi dhatu*/ *Poshya dhatu* that which is being nourished. Various opinions regarding number of *Saara* by different *Acharyas* are summarized in table below. Since mind and body are substrate for diseases, strength of a person depends on mind and body. *Saara Pareeksha* is carried out to infer the eminence of *Dhatu*s to resist to the strength of diseases and therapies and *Satva Saara* to infer especially mental strength. Successive *Saara Purushas* are comparatively

superior i.e., *Satva Saara Purusha* is superior to the other seven *Dhatu saara* and *Sarva saara purusha* is most superior.

Saara and Prakriti

Prakriti is the classification of human beings based on characteristic manifested due to predominance of somatic humors. These differences are stated to be natural. *Prakriti* of an individual is determined at the time of conception itself and there after it remain unchanged^[3]. This *Dosha* predominance will be reflected in each and every aspect of the individual. *Acharya Chakrapani* introduced the concept of *Bija bhaga* and explains that *Pitta prakopa* of *Bija bhaga* when *Netrendriya* is formed may result in *Andhata* or blindness. *Prakriti* regulates the characteristics of individual as a whole. *Dosha* predominance in *Prakriti* level also influences *Saara*. Thus, *Prakriti* of an individual gives pool of information about the individual. Eg: *Saara* of an individual can be inferred by assessing the *Prakriti* variables for Eg: in *Vata prakriti*.

- Roughness of *vata prakriti* indicates that, ability of *Vata prakriti* individual to utilize food for anabolism of the *Dhatu*s, *Rasa*, *Medas*, *Majja* and *Sukra* is less.
- Prominent veins and tendons- *Mamsa saara* is less
- complexion - *Rakta saara* and *Twak saara* is less
- Tallness and *Mahotsaha* - *Vata prakriti* persons are mainly *Asthi saara purushas*
- Also *Satva saarata* will be less because of the predominance of *Raajasam satva* in *Manas*.

So, *Vata prakriti persons are having Avara saara and Alpa Bala ayus*.

Determinants in the Development of Saara

It is same as that of factors influencing *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* of an individual is formed at the time of conception and it remains unchanged thereafter. It depends on *Streebeeja* and *Pumbeeja*, nature of *Kaala*, season and menstrual cycle, nature of *Garbhasaya* and *Ahara* and *Vihara* of mother during pregnancy. According to *Chakrapani*, in the human fertilized ovum *Bijabhagas* represent *Pratyangas* of the body. The strength of *Dhatu* in body depends on the quality of the *Bijabhagas*. The magnitudes of *Dosha* at the time of conception influence the *Beejabhagas* and thus each *Prakriti* has unique physical and mental qualities. *Matrujam*, *pitrujam*, *Satmayaja*, *Satvajam*, *Atmajam*, *Rasajam*, *Bhavas* influence formation of *Prakriti* in an individual. All these factors influence *Saara* also.

Saara As A Measure of Bala

Sarva roga samprapti explained according to *Ayurveda* states that, vitiated *Dosha* will localize on *dhatu*s to produce diseases. Cause of *Dosha* vitiation is administration of *Ahara viharas* which are of the same *Guna* of *Dosha* and dissimilar *Guna* of *Dhatu*s. Different *Dhatu*s possess dissimilar *Gunas* and dissimilar *Bhoota* constitution. Strength of *Dhatu* depends on *Ahara vihara* and *Agni* of the person. *Saara pareeksha* is the tool to assess the excellence in function of *Dhatu*s. So, *Pravara dhatu saarata* signifies that individual is habituated to *Ahara viharas* conducive (*Hita*) for him with a proper functioning *Agni whereas Avara saara* indicates either his

Agni or his *Ahara viharas* are not wholesome (*Satmya*). *Avara saara* persons are susceptible to diseases. If in *Saara pareeksha*, the results indicate decreased *Saara* of one particular *Dhatu*, there is a chance of localization of vitiated *Dosha* (*Dosha doshya sammurchana*) in that *Dhatu*. Hence food and regimen homologous to that *Dhatu* (*Dhatu vriddhikara ahara viharas*) should be advised. Expression of *Saara* alters with *Sahaja*, *Kalaja* and *Yuktikrita bala* of *Sareera* and *Manas*. *Sahaja balamkapha prakruti* persons are having *Pravara dhatu saara* while *Vaata prakruti* persons are having *Avara dhatu saara*. *Kalaja bala* depend on *Ritu* and *Vayas*. *Dhatu saara* is less in children whose *Dhatu*s are in developing stage (*Asampoorena dhatutwam*), good in *Madhyamam* and less in *Vridhdha* due to *Ksheena dhatu*s. *Saara* variation happens in *Ritus*. *Agneya ritu* produce decrease in strength of *Saumya dhatu*s. *Ritucharya* can prevent this variation of *Saara* according to seasons. In *Yuktikritam bala*, *Dhatu samya kara ahara viharas* increase *Dhatu saarata* while *Asatmya ahara viharas* decrease *Dhatu saarata*. *Mano doshas* are the primary cause of *Manasika vyadhis*. Healthy mental status depends on the predominance of *Satva guna* with proper quantity of *rajas* and *Tamo guna*. Memory, *Bhakti* and *Dhairya* are important *Gunas* of *Rogi*, hence these *Gunas* aid to heal the person when treatment is done. *Satva bala* depends on *Sahaja satva* i.e., *Manasika prakruti* and *Sareera prakruti*. Threshold of allostatic load will be more for a *Pravara satva person*. *Satvika prakruti* are less afflicted with diseases. *Ritus* and age play a major role in maintaining mental health status of an individual. In *Yuktikrita bala*, *Dhatu*s contribute to the proper functioning of mind. So, *Dhatu asatmyakara ahara viharas* will be non conducive to mind also.

Determinants in the Expression of Saara

Expression of *Saara* is primarily influenced by two factors 1.ability of an individual to utilize food so as to convert it into *Sareera dhatu*s. 2. Type of food consumed.

Saara as the Ability of Individual to Utilize Food

Saara is defined as the purest form of *Dhatu*s. Quality of *Dhatu* depends on proper functioning of *Agni*. *Agni* is of 3 types, *Jataragni*, *Bhootagni* and *Dhatwagni*. Functions of *Agni* can be categorized into 2 headings. 1. Digestion 2. Assimilation. Digestion is brought about by *Jataragni*. This ability of body is examined under *Ahara sakti* of *Dasa vidha pareeksha*. Under physiological conditions, formation of *Dhatu* depends on *Bhootagni paka* and *Dhatuagni paka*. *Bhootagni paka* converts *Ahara saara* into *Sajateeya* components that can be utilized by the body. This *Sajateeya* component is utilized by *Dhatwagni* for production of *Dhatu*s, *Upadhatu*s and *Mala*. Any defect in *Bhootagni* or *Dhatvagni* will be manifested as decreased measure in quality of that *Dhatu* i.e., decreased *Dhatu saara*.

Measure of Saara is Influenced by Food Intake

Production of *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *mala* is from *Ahara*. According to Ayurvedic theory of similar things (*samanya*), similar increases similar (*Vriddhi samane sarvesham*). In order to maintain the quality of *Dhatu*s, variety of food homologous to each *Dhatu*s should be consumed i.e. why *Sarva rasa Satmya* is considered as supreme and *Susruta* explains importance of *Vichitra bhojana* in food regimen. *Saara* or quality of *Dhatu* will be reduced even though *Jataragni* and *Bhootagni* is efficient, if it does not get raw material. This may even lead to *Avara saarata* of an individual due to depletion of the proper nutrients supplied through food. Here comes the importance of *Dhatu vriddhikara ahara*, specific to increase *Dhatu saara*. The differential diagnosis can be made through *Satmya pareeksha* by which physician get idea of quality of food intake. Hence, each and every attribute in *Dasha vidha pareeksha* is important. *Snigdha aharas*

Vyayamasakti vs Saara

Both these attributes assess *Bala* of a person. But, each attribute is important for assessment of *Bala* in its own way. General examination and systemic examination are steps of clinical examination. Similarly *Bala* assessment through *Vyayama* is more generalized and *Bala* assessment through *Saara* is more specific. If a person's *Vyayama sakti* is less, then the measurement of each *Saara* can be done by *Saara pareeksha*, which enables the physician to diagnose the *Dhatu* involved in the genesis of disease.

CONCLUSION

Sometimes the physician may take a wrong decision only by looking at the body such as the patient is strong because of being corpulent, he is weak because of leanness, he is very strong because of possessing a big body and he is very weak because of possessing a small body. But it is observed that some persons having small body and leanness are strong like the small ants carrying a big load. In *Ashtanga Samgraha* simile was given comparing elephant with a large body to lion stronger than elephant with a small body. Hence one should examine the *Saara* of an individual to get the correct assessment of strength.

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