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A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF JATHARAGNI AND OJAS DURING YAMADAMSHTRA KALA

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ABSTRACT

Background Ayurveda considers maintenance of health to be dependent upon appropriate synchronization between the individual and the changing external environment. Among the physiological factors responsible for this adaptation, Jatharagni occupies a central position because it governs digestion, transformation, assimilation and subsequent nourishment of the Dhatus. Ojas, regarded as the supreme essence of well-nourished Dhatus, represents vitality, stability, strength and resistance of the body. Yamadamshttra Kala, occurring during the transition from Sharad towards Hemanta, is a physiologically sensitive period in which climatic and dietary changes may challenge the adaptive mechanisms of the body. Understanding the functional relationship between Jatharagni and Ojas during this period is therefore relevant to the preventive approach of Ayurveda. **Materials and Methods** A conceptual literary review was conducted using the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Ashtanga Samgraha and Sharangadhara Samhita. Relevant commentaries, textbooks and peer-reviewed articles related to Agni, Ojas, Ritucharya, Ritusandhi and seasonal physiological adaptation were reviewed and critically synthesized.

Result and Discussion The relationship between Jatharagni and Ojas appears functionally sequential rather than independent, because deterioration of primary digestion can ultimately influence tissue nutrition and vitality. Yamadamshttra Kala may therefore be considered an important period for Agni Rakshana and preservation of Ojas. **Conclusion** Balanced Jatharagni is an important functional prerequisite for adequate Dhatu Poshana and maintenance of Ojas. Appropriate diet, lifestyle and gradual seasonal adaptation during Yamadamshttra Kala may support digestive-metabolic balance, strength and physiological resistance.

Keywords: Jatharagni, Ojas, Yamadamshttra Kala, Ritucharya, Ritusandhi, Bala

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda explains health as a dynamic state in which Dosha, Agni, Dhatu and Mala remain in physiological equilibrium along with a pleasant state of mind, senses and consciousness. This equilibrium is continuously influenced by Kala, particularly seasonal variation. The concept of Ritucharya was therefore developed to enable the individual to adapt diet and lifestyle according to predictable environmental changes. The strength of the individual, state of Dosha, digestive capacity and suitability of food vary with the seasons; consequently, a regimen appropriate in one season may not remain appropriate in another. Proper seasonal adaptation is thus an important component of Swasthavritta and preventive medicine in Ayurveda.¹

Seasonal transition is particularly significant because the body must adjust to alterations in temperature, humidity, duration of daylight, appetite, dietary habits and activity. Ayurvedic literature recommends gradual alteration of seasonal habits instead of sudden withdrawal of the previous regimen and immediate adoption of the subsequent one. Failure of adaptation may produce Dosha Vaishamya, altered digestive capacity and increased susceptibility to illness. The principle of Ritucharya therefore reflects an individualized approach in which food and behaviour are modified according to environmental conditions and physiological strength.²

A specific period described in Sharangadhara Samhita is Yamadamshttra Kala. It comprises the last eight days of Kartika and the first eight days of Agrahayana or Margashirsha. The text emphasizes controlled food intake during this period for preservation of health. This sixteen-day interval broadly corresponds to the transition from Sharad towards Hemanta, when external temperature gradually falls and digestive-metabolic requirements change. The specific dietary caution attached to this period suggests that food quantity should be adapted to actual digestive capacity rather than to habitual intake alone.³

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim: To critically evaluate the conceptual interrelationship between Jatharagni and Ojas during Yamadamshttra Kala according to Ayurvedic principles.

1. To review the Ayurvedic concepts of Jatharagni, Ojas and Yamadamshttra Kala.
2. To understand the influence of seasonal transition on Jatharagni.
3. To analyze the role of Jatharagni in Dhatu Poshana and preservation of Ojas.
4. To assess the effects of inappropriate Ahara-Vihara during Yamadamshttra Kala.
5. To highlight the preventive significance of appropriate seasonal adaptation for maintenance of Agni, Bala and Ojas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was designed as a conceptual narrative review. Primary literary sources included the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Ashtanga Samgraha and Sharangadhara Samhita, along with available commentaries and English translations. Secondary sources included Ayurvedic textbooks and peer-reviewed articles dealing with Jatharagni, Ojas, Ahara, Ritucharya, Ritusandhi, seasonal physiology and contemporary interpretations of digestion, metabolism and adaptation. Relevant material was collected, classified under predetermined conceptual headings and critically synthesized. As this was a purely literary

review involving no human participants, ethical approval and informed consent were not applicable.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY

1. Concept of Jatharagni

Agni is a fundamental physiological principle of Ayurveda and is responsible for digestion, transformation, assimilation and utilization of nutrients. Among its different forms, Jatharagni is regarded as principal because ingested food is first subjected to its action. Properly functioning Jatharagni produces suitable Ahara Rasa, which becomes available for subsequent tissue nutrition. Classical descriptions connect normal Agni with longevity, complexion, strength, health, enthusiasm, nourishment, lustre, Ojas and vital functions, demonstrating that its role extends beyond gastrointestinal digestion alone.⁴

2. Functional Hierarchy of Agni

Ayurvedic physiology broadly explains thirteen forms of Agni: one Jatharagni, five Bhutagni and seven Dhatvagni. Jatharagni initiates digestion of food; Bhutagni facilitates transformation of elemental components, whereas Dhatvagni participates in tissue-level transformation and nutrition. These divisions represent a coordinated metabolic sequence rather than isolated events. Disturbance at the primary digestive level can therefore influence later stages of tissue nourishment, making Jatharagni the first functional gateway between external nutrition and internal tissue integrity.⁵

3. Concept of Ojas

Ojas occupies a unique position in Ayurvedic physiology. Sushruta describes it as the superior essence or Tejas of the Dhatus extending from Rasa to Shukra and relates it closely to Bala. It may therefore be understood as the highest qualitative expression of properly nourished and functionally competent tissues rather than as a single anatomical substance. Maintenance of Ojas is associated with vitality, stability, endurance and the ability of the organism to withstand internal and external challenges.⁶

4. Properties and Functions of Ojas

Classical descriptions attribute Snigdha, Soma-atmaka, Shuddha and nourishing qualities to Ojas and describe its close relationship with maintenance of life. Although particularly associated with Hridaya, its influence is systemic. Adequate Ojas is reflected through Bala, stable bodily functions, healthy tissue nourishment, satisfactory complexion and psychological steadiness. Conditions producing prolonged improper nutrition, tissue depletion or severe physiological stress may consequently impair the functional state represented by Ojas.⁷

5. Formation of Ojas and Dependence on Agni

The conceptual pathway leading to satisfactory Ojas begins with appropriate Ahara, but food can nourish tissues only after proper transformation. Normal Jatharagni converts ingested food into physiologically useful nutritive material, while subsequent Bhutagni and Dhatvagni functions facilitate progressively refined metabolism. When these processes occur optimally, each Dhātu receives suitable nourishment and its superior essence is preserved. Thus, although Ojas is

described in relation to the Dhatus, its maintenance is ultimately dependent on efficient digestion and metabolism beginning at the level of Jatharagni.⁸

6. Concept of Yamadamshttra Kala

Yamadamshttra Kala is a specifically identified short seasonal interval requiring special dietary attention. It includes the last eight days of Kartika and the first eight days of Agrahayana/Margashirsha, giving a total duration of sixteen days. This period occurs around the transition towards the colder Hemanta season. The instruction regarding restrained or controlled food intake should be interpreted in the broader Ayurvedic context of matching the quantity of food to digestive capacity rather than applying an identical quantity to every person.⁹

7. Yamadamshttra Kala and Ritusandhi

The principle of Ritusandhi explains that the last seven days of one season and the first seven days of the following season form a transitional period in which the previous regimen should be gradually withdrawn and the regimen of the next season gradually introduced. Sudden adoption or withdrawal can create Asatmya because the organism has not yet adapted. Yamadamshttra Kala is a separate but conceptually related seasonal caution pertaining specifically to the Kartika-Margashirsha interval. Both concepts emphasize gradual adaptation rather than abrupt change.¹⁰

8. Jatharagni during the Transition toward Hemanta

In established Hemanta Ritu, external cold limits dissipation of body heat and digestive power is classically described as strong, especially in individuals with good Bala. Nourishing food is therefore recommended in winter. During the preceding transition, however, environmental conditions and physiological response may not become fully established simultaneously in every person. Assessment of actual hunger, digestive comfort, bowel pattern and postprandial response is therefore more rational than assuming uniformly strong Agni merely on the basis of the calendar.¹¹

9. Ahara-Agni Interrelationship during Yamadamshttra Kala

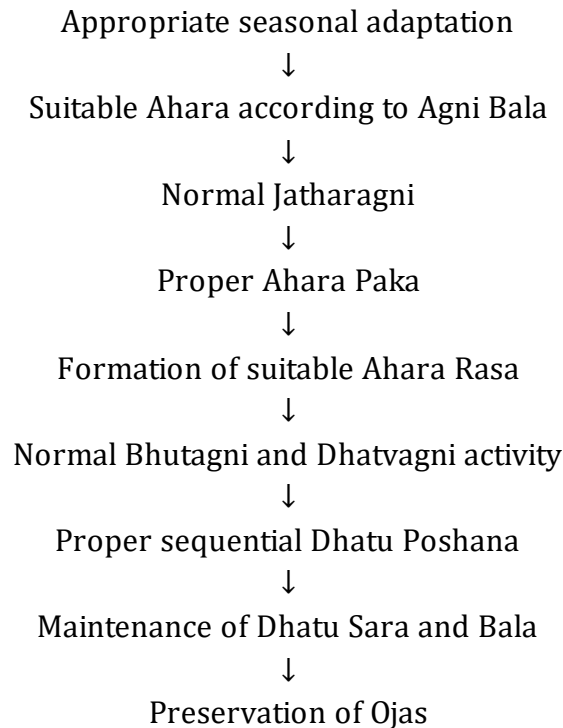
Food is the substrate on which Agni acts, while the quantity and quality of food that can be efficiently processed are determined by Agni Bala. If intake exceeds digestive capacity, food remains incompletely processed and may favour Ama formation. Conversely, if food is markedly inadequate in a person with strong digestive capacity, sufficient nutritional substrate may not be available for maintenance of the tissues. The relationship therefore requires proportionality between Abhyavaharana Shakti and Jarana Shakti, particularly during seasonal transition.¹²

10. Importance of Matra of Ahara

Ayurveda repeatedly emphasizes that the appropriate quantity of food is not identical for all persons or at all times. Matra should be determined according to the nature of food, digestive capacity, individual strength and physiological condition. During Yamadamshttra Kala, controlled intake may therefore be understood through the principle of Agni-anusara Ahara: food should neither overwhelm digestion nor leave a strongly functioning digestive system chronically undernourished. Warm, fresh and suitable food can be gradually modified as Hemanta becomes established.¹³

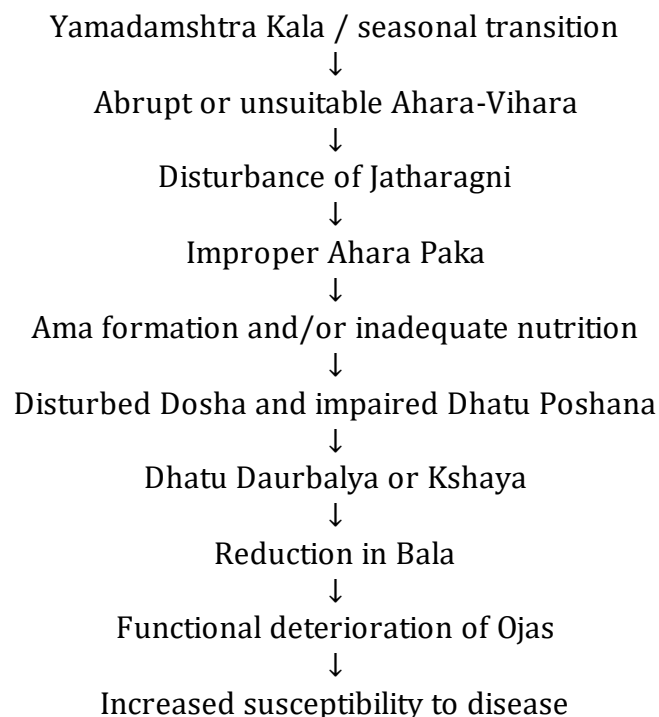
11. Proposed Interrelationship between Jatharagni and Ojas

The relationship can be understood as a sequential nutritional-metabolic continuum in which appropriate seasonal behaviour protects digestive capacity, proper digestion provides useful nutritive material, and satisfactory tissue nourishment supports Bala and Ojas. In this model, Jatharagni represents the initiating transformative force while Ojas reflects the superior functional outcome of adequately nourished tissues.



12. Samprapti of Agni Disturbance and Ojas Impairment

A probable pathological sequence during maladaptation to Yamadamshttra Kala may be described as follows:



13. Role of Dosha and Samagni

Because Yamadamshttra Kala lies around the transition from Sharad towards Hemanta, the influence of Pitta from Sharad and the progressive effect of increasing cold must be considered. The Dosha state can modify the pattern of Agni: Kapha predominance is associated with Mandagni, Vata with Vishamagni, Pitta with Tikshnagni, and physiological equilibrium with Samagni. The ideal preventive objective during transition is maintenance of Samagni, characterized by appropriate hunger, timely digestion, lightness after digestion and satisfactory elimination.

14. Role of Ahara and Vihara

Diet during Yamadamshttra Kala should respect genuine hunger and digestive capacity. Freshly prepared, warm and easily digestible meals are preferable to stale, excessively heavy or incompatible food. As colder conditions become established and appetite increases, nourishing and unctuous food suitable for Hemanta may be introduced gradually. Diet alone, however, is insufficient when lifestyle is incompatible with the season. Adequate sleep, suitable physical activity, protection from excessive cold, appropriate oil application and avoidance of unnecessary exhaustion support physiological adaptation and indirectly favour Ojas.

15. Practical Principles for Agni Rakshana

1. Consume food after manifestation of genuine hunger and according to Agni Bala.
2. Avoid excessive, very heavy, incompatible or poorly digestible meals during incomplete seasonal adaptation.
3. Prefer fresh, warm and appropriately prepared food.
4. Avoid sudden transition from the Sharad regimen to an excessively heavy Hemanta regimen.
5. Increase nourishing food progressively as cold and digestive capacity become established.
6. Avoid unnecessary fasting in individuals with clear and strong appetite.
7. Follow Dinacharya and Ritucharya with adequate rest, suitable activity and protection from excessive cold.
8. Individualize the regimen according to Prakriti, Agni, Satmya, Vaya, Desha, Bala and existing health status.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

1. Jatharagni is the principal initiating factor governing digestion and subsequent nutritional transformation.
2. Proper Jatharagni supports satisfactory formation of Ahara Rasa and subsequent Bhutagni and Dhatvagni activity.
3. Ojas represents the superior functional essence of adequately nourished Dhatus and is closely related to Bala, vitality and stability.

4. The relationship between Jatharagni and Ojas is sequential: proper Agni promotes proper Dhatu Poshana, which supports preservation of Ojas.
5. Yamadamshttra Kala is a specific sixteen-day period comprising the last eight days of Kartika and first eight days of Agrahayana/Margashirsha.
6. Yamadamshttra Kala should not be treated as completely synonymous with the general fourteen-day concept of Ritusandhi, although both emphasize careful adaptation.
7. Excessive intake beyond digestive capacity may favour Agnimandya, Ama and impaired tissue nourishment.
8. Excessive restriction after development of strong Hemanta Agni may fail to satisfy nutritional requirements and may favour Dhatu Kshaya.
9. Regulation of food according to Agni Bala, rather than rigid quantity, appears to be the central preventive principle.
10. Gradual seasonal adaptation may help preserve Samagni, Dhatu Poshana, Bala and Ojas.

DISCUSSION

The present conceptual analysis indicates that Jatharagni and Ojas are interconnected through the process of nutrition and metabolic transformation. Jatharagni acts at the beginning of the nutritional sequence, whereas Ojas reflects the superior functional state achieved after satisfactory nourishment of the tissues. If food intake exceeds Jarana Shakti, incomplete digestion and Ama may result; if intake remains substantially below the requirement of strong Agni, adequate tissue substrate may not be available. Health therefore depends on maintaining a proportionate relationship between digestive power and dietary intake rather than maximizing or minimizing either factor independently.¹⁴

The seasonal context adds further significance to this relationship. Contemporary observations indicate that ambient temperature, season and dietary pattern can influence metabolic demand and the composition and activity of the intestinal microbiome. Seasonal variation in gut microbial communities and cold-associated changes in energy utilization provide biological parallels to the Ayurvedic observation that digestive capacity and dietary requirements are not constant throughout the year. These findings do not establish a direct equivalence between Agni and the microbiome, but they offer a plausible framework for investigating seasonally adjusted diet and gastrointestinal physiology.¹⁵

From a broader scientific perspective, Agni may be regarded as an Ayurvedic functional construct encompassing digestion, biotransformation, assimilation and tissue-level metabolism rather than being equated with one enzyme, organ or biochemical pathway. Likewise, Ojas should not be reduced exclusively to conventional immunity because its classical attributes include vitality, strength and tissue stability. During Yamadamshttra Kala, the most coherent interpretation is therefore dynamic: appropriate seasonal behaviour preserves digestive-metabolic efficiency, efficient transformation maintains tissue nutrition, and well-nourished tissues support the functional state described as Ojas. Future observational studies may evaluate appetite, Agni Bala, metabolic parameters, seasonal dietary patterns, inflammatory markers and validated indicators of general health across this transition.¹⁶

CONCLUSION

The present conceptual review demonstrates a close functional relationship between Jatharagni and Ojas during Yamadamshttra Kala. Jatharagni initiates transformation of consumed food into suitable nutritive material, while adequate nourishment and metabolism of successive Dhatus support maintenance of Ojas. Impairment of Jatharagni through excessive, incompatible or poorly timed food may indirectly compromise Ojas by disturbing Ahara Paka and Dhātu Poshana, whereas inadequate intake in the presence of progressively strong Hemanta Agni may favour tissue depletion. The preventive principle during this period is therefore moderation, individualization and gradual seasonal adaptation through suitable Ahara, Vihara, Ritucharya and Agni-anusara Matra.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nil

SOURCE OF SUPPORT

None

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