

Significance of Sara Pariksha in Ayurveda: A Critical Review

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Abstract

In Ayurveda, Sara Pariksha is one among the ten types of methods to examine a patient, stated as Dashvidha Aatura Pariksha. Sara Pariksha primarily determines the strength of a person. Acharya Chakrapani illustrated Sara as 'Vishudhataro Dhatu', which means the essence of all Dhatu. Eight types are explained by Acharya Charaka, each one characterized by both physical as well as psychological parameters. These contribute to the physician in deciding the Bala of a person. This review study mainly focuses on material available on Dhatu Sara in Ayurvedic literature, Brihat Samhita, text related to astrology. Various research papers and studies have been reviewed and referred in the present study that establishes its significance in Ayurveda. Studies so far conducted on Asthi Sara, Majja Sara, Rakta Sara and overall Dhatu Sara have been reported in this article. It can be concluded that Sara is one of the parameters for the assessment of strength of an individual. Further, more studies can be carried out to find out its relation with recent laboratory parameters. Development of some standardized tools or parameters for the assessment of Dhatu Sara may be an important contribution to clinical research. This can be of great help to physicians in maintaining the uniformity in assessing the qualities of each Dhatu Sara. The Sara Pariksha is significant in analyzing the Bala Pramana of a patient. On the basis of Bala, the physician decides the type of medicine and its dose to be given in Samshodhana or Samshamana Chikitsa.

Keywords: Sara Pariksha, Bala, Dhatu Sara, Majja Sara, Rakta Sara

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INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, Sara Pariksha is one among the ten types of methods to examine a person or a patient, which is described as Dashvidha Aatura Pariksha. Sara Pariksha primarily determines the strength of a person. On the basis of excellence of Saptadhatu and Sattva, eight types of Sara have been explained by Acharya Charaka [1]. Acharya Chakrapani has described Sara as 'Vishudhataro Dhatu', which means the essence of all Dhatus [2]. Every particular Sara is characterized by both physical as well as psychological parameters. These parameters and characters are helpful in deciding the strength of a person. Physician should not be captivated to decide if any person is strong or weak from his large or small body structure or appearance. Small, lean and thin persons seem to be strong enough. It is just like "Pippillika Bhara Haranvat Siddhi" which denotes that small looking ants can carry much more weight than its own weight [3].

Ayurveda emphasizes on maintaining the health of healthy and treating the diseased one. The Sara Pariksha can be carried out in both diseased as well healthy persons to know the Bala Pramana. The Bala has importance in context of Samshodhana also, as quoted in Kalpasthana of Charak Samhita that Madhyam (average) and Heena (inferior) Bala persons should be given Madhyam (average) and Mridu (mild) Samshodhana [4]. Aushadha Kala also depends on the Bala of the patient. Balwana Rogi is given medicine without food early in the morning and Durbala Rogi is instructed to take medicine mixed with light and wholesome food [5]. There is a strong relationship in Chikitsa and Rogi Bala [6]. The Dwividha Upakrama told in Charaka Sutrasthana also depends on the Bala of the person. Even it has been told in Samhita that a wise physician should treat the patient after examining these ten entities carefully and not just with formulations alone, these are Dosha, Aushadha, Desha, Kala, Satmya, Agni, Satva, Oak, Vaya and Bala [7]. In

the management of a disease, physician must select the *Panchkarma* procedures or oral medicine and its dose according to the *Bala* of the patient [8].

All the available Ayurvedic literatures, related peer-reviewed articles and research papers published in distinguished journals on *Sara pariksha* are reviewed, critically analyzed and reported in this article.

REVIEW RESULTS

Acharya Sushruta classified *Sara* in eight types and described the characters of each one [9]. Among these eight, *Sattva Sara* denotes longer life and better prosperity than the *Twaka Sara*. *Sushruta Samhita* also emphasized that a physician can treat a patient more effectively, if he assesses the life expectancy of patient on the basis of the criteria of measurement of each body part and *Sara Pariksha* [10]. *Acharya Kashyapa* has mentioned nine types of *Sara* with *Oja Sara* as an additional kind of *Sara* [11]. *Acharya Vagbhata* has only given the types of *Sara* without describing their characteristics [12, 13].

The author of *Brihat Samhita*, *Acharya Varahmihir* has described *Sara Pariksha* or nature and characters of persons according to *Sara* [14]. There is similarity in characters and result of *Sara* described in *Brihat Samhita* and *Charak Samhita*. For example, the symptoms of *Rakta Sara* in *Brihat Samhita* are 'reddish palate, lips, teeth, gums, tongue, anus, hands, feet and eyes.' Similarly in *Charak Samhita*, *Raktasara* persons have 'the ears, eyes, mouth, tongue, lips, nose, hands and sole of the feet, nails, forehead and genitals unctuous, reddish and full of lusture'. On the basis of physical characters, the knowledge of mental characters and physical and mental strength can be understood [14].

The qualities of eight types of *Sara* according to *Acharya Charak* and *Sushruta* are listed in the Table 1.

Sara has also been classified into *Pravara*, *Madhyama* and *Avara* types [23]. Persons having *Sarva Sara* have great power, blissful, can tolerate pressure/good endurance, good self

confidence in initiating any work, always inclined to welfare activities, firm and well built body, correct gait, unctuous and deep voice, enjoying wellbeing, power, wealth and deserve respect, delayed ageing process, less affected by diseases and have large number of children with similar traits and long life [23]. The persons having qualities opposite to the above are *Asara* persons, whereas *Madhyam Sara* persons have some (3–4) qualities of *Pravarasara* [24].

DISCUSSION

Sara Pariksha is being useful for understanding the physical as well as psychological strength of a person. It also helps in rightly assessing the dose and type of medicine to be prescribed on the basis of strength of the patient. The assessment of different *Dhatu Sara* and their association with distinct parameters have been taken up by various researchers. These parameters are mostly subjective that may be contribute in analysis of *Sara* of the person.

Asthisarata and Bone Mineral Density

A study analyzed that individuals showing more percentage of *Asthisarata* have better bone density. It turned up to be a perfect positive correlation between bone density and *Asthisarata*. Although *Mamsasarata* also found a correlation but it was significantly smaller [25]. This can be a groundwork for the assessment of *Asthisarata* by a physician through modern parameters. Anthropometric measurements of ankle, knee and other joints and bones for the assessment of *Asthisara* can be more explored for close relationship. As mentioned in Ayurvedic classics, individuals having the excellence of *Asthi* are characterized by robust heels, ankles, knees, fore-arms, collar-bones, chin, head, joints, bones, nails and teeth.

Dhatu Sarata in Demented Children

Another study looked for the variance of *Dhatu Sarata* in mentally retarded and healthy children and derived statistically highly significant result in healthy except in *Mamsa* and *Asthisarata*. *Satvasarata* was almost on lower side in mentally retarded children [26]. The development of *Mamsa*, *Meda* and *Asthi dhatu* manifested during adulthood, so this

Table 1: Qualities of Eight Types of Sara.

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S. No.	Sara	Acharya Charak		Acharya Sushruta
1	Twak Sara	Skin	Unctuous, smooth, soft, clear, lustrous	Skin and hair glistening and soft
		Hair	Fine, sparse, deep rooted, delicate	
		Mental features	Happiness, good fortune, power, enjoyment, intelligence, learning, health, cheerfulness, longevity [15]	
2	Rakta Sara	Ear, eye, face, tongue, nose, lips	palm of hands, sole of feet, nails, forehead and genitals are unctuous, red and brilliant	Unctuous and coppery nails, eyes, palate, tongue, lips, palm and soles
		Mental features	Happiness, sharp intellect, magnanimity, tenderness, moderate strength, lack of endurance and tolerance to heat [16]	
3	Mamsa Sara	Temples, forehead, nape, eyes, cheek, jaws, neck, shoulders, abdomen, axillae, chest, hands, feet and joints	Equipped with firm heavy and good looking muscles	Body without any depression, the bony joints are concealed and muscles are well developed
		Mental features	Forbearance, restraint, lack of greed, wealth, learning, happiness, simplicity, health, strength and longevity [17]	
4	Meda Sara	Complexion, voice, eyes, hair, skin hairs, nails, teeth, lips, urine and faeces	Unctuous	Unctuous urine and sweat, melodious voice, fleshy body and intolerance to exertion
		Mental features	Wealth, power, happiness, enjoyment, charity, simplicity and delicacy in dealings [18]	
5	Asthi Sara	Heels, ankles, knees, elbows, collar bones, chin, head and joints	Prominent	Big head and shoulders and firm teeth, jaw, bone and nails
		Bones, nails and teeth	Large	
		Mental features	Enthusiastic, active, enduring, having strong and firm body as well as longevity [19]	
6	Majja Sara	Soft organs, strong, unctuous complexion and sweet voice, prominent, long and rounded joints		Person is not lean, has superior strength, melodious and resonant voice, auspicious features and big eyes
		Mental features	Long-lived, strong and endowed with learning, wealth, understanding, progeny and respect [20]	
7	Sukra Sara	look	Charming person , looking with charm, eyes as if filled with milk, immensely exhilarated	Unctuous, compact and white bone, teeth and nails; with numerous progeny
		teeth	Unctuous, rounded, firm, even and compact	
		Having pleasant and unctuous complexion and voice brilliant, having prominent buttocks		
		Mental features	Liked by women, are strong and endowed with happiness, supremacy, health, wealth, honor and progeny [21]	
8	Sattva Sara	Endowed with memory, devotion and are grateful, learned, pure, courageous, skillful, resolute, fighting in battles with prowess, free from anxiety, having well directed and serious intellect and activities. engaged in virtuous acts [22]		Possesses memory, devotion, wisdom, purity and valour, with tendency in welfare activities

might be the reason for difference between healthy and the study group. As each *Dhatu Sarata* has both the characteristics of physical as well as psychological dimension, the *Satva* is also being nourished by the *Dhatu*. Perhaps this can be the rationale responsible for low *Satva Sara* in the study group.

Majjasarata

A study conducted on *Majjasarata* in a population of 100 was to grade and objectivise the characters of *Majjasarata* mentioned in Ayurvedic literature [27]. Among 100, nobody was *Uttamsara* (i.e. *Majjasara* above 70%), 12 individuals were *Madhyamsara* (40–70%) and

88 were *Alpasara*. The study concluded that the sixth *Dhatu* among seven *Dhatu* i.e. *Majjadhatu* is a *Gambhirdhatu* (deep seated) which might be the reason for rare occurrence of *Majjasarata* [27].

Raktasarata and Haematological Parameters

Another study was done to assess the association of blood indices with *Dhatu*sarata. *Raktasarata* showed positive and significant correlation with MCHC, MCH, CI and MCV. MCHC showed positive correlation with highest correlation value [28]. These laboratory parameters can be a foundation for *Raktasarata*. Survey performed for *Rakta Sara Pariksha* on 372 healthy individuals revealed to have normal laboratory parameters in *Pravara Rakta Sara*. The study also shows that out of 63 *Pravara Rakta Sara* cases, 62 were found to be *Sarva Rasa Saatmya* [29]. While considering gender wise *Dhatu*sarata, the value of haematological parameters in each *Dhatu*sara are higher in males as compared to females according to a study. Higher *Sara* scores in males are suggestive of more strength as compared to females [30].

Dhatu Sarata and Bala

Research study revealed that persons with *Uttamsarata* are excellent with good physical efficiency index, while *Madhyamsara* persons have low average physical efficiency index and *Heensarata* is associated with poor physical efficiency index [31]. Aforesaid study is a clear guide that *Dhatu*sarata state about the *Bala* of a person.

Dhatu Sarata Computation

While expressing the various clinical parameters according to Ayurveda, difficulties arise in uniformity of calculation. In a study, weighted mean seems to hold great potential while depicting *Dhatu Sarata* [32]. This method does not overlook the portion/share of the individual *Dhatu*s to overall *Sarata* in that individual; and also bestow the researcher to target on the status of individual *Dhatu*. Various research studies have been conducted on particular *Dhatu*sara comprehensively. But some areas still remain passive. Measurement of firmness of muscles over neck-temporal-shoulders region may be considered to explore further purview of *Mamsasara Pariksha*. After

all, *Mamsasara* persons are characterized by stability, heaviness and firmness of muscles.

From the above studies it can be interpreted that there are lots of factors that are associated and dependent on *Sarata* of an individual. *Sara* is somehow related with *Agni*, as *Dhatu*s are formed after the *Jatharagni* acted upon the food that is ingested. After *Jatharagnipaka*, it is subjected to *Bhootagnipaka*. Then *Dhatwagnipaka* occurs that works for the nourishment and replenishment of *Dhatu*s. *Dhatu*s have two states in the body, *Poshakadhatu* and *Poshyadhatu*. *Sara* is the direct measurement of *Sthayi/poshya Dhatu*, which is being nourished [33]. Strength of *Dhatu* depends on *Ahara-Vihara* and *Agni* of the person. For a healthy person, equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala* is essential as these are fundamental constituents of the body. Out of seven *Dhatu*s (*Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja* and *Shukra*), the former one gives nourishment to the next *Dhatu*. The high quality of each *Dhatu* will show characters as mentioned in classics.

CONCLUSION

Sara being one of the parameters for the assessment of strength of an individual has potentiality for advanced research in this domain. *Raktasarata* can be positively correlated with blood indices MCHC, MCH, CI and MCV. Bone mineral density can be one of the criteria for *Asthisara* estimation. Further, more studies can be carried out to find out its relation with recent laboratory parameters. Researchers can develop some standardized tools or parameters for the assessment *Dhatu Sara* of an individual. This can be of great help to physicians in maintaining the uniformity in assessing the qualities of each *Dhatu Sara*. The *Panchavidha Kashaya Kalpana* (*Swarasa*, *Kalka*, *Kwatha*, *Sheeta* and *Phanta*) is to be selected with due regard to the strength of the patient and disease. All these are not equally useful in all cases; they have to be determined person to person. *Dhatu*sarata gives an outlook about the *Bala* of the *Aatura*. Additional scope of study can be response of *Rasayana* therapy in particular and overall *Dhatu*sarata. Further area of exploration could be about the basis of features mentioned in *Brihat Samhita* regarding *Dhatu*sarata, as it is an astrology based treatise.

Clinical Significance

The *Sara Pariksha* is significant in analyzing the *Bala Pramana* of a patient. On the basis of *Bala*, the physician decides the type of medicine and its dose to be given in *Samshodhana* or *Samshamanachikitsa*. Even the *Aushadha Kala* is also dependent on the *Bala* of the patient. *Dhatu Sara* assessment can also be advantageous in *Samprapti Vighatana Chikitsa*. It gives an insight regarding the status of individual *Dhatu*.

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