

Critical analysis of Sara concept and its utility in disease management

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ABSTRACT

The clinical examination of a patient is the preliminary subject of medicine which is also available in a very illustrative form in the classical texts of Ayurveda. The modern advancement in pathological approach to disease is gradually replacing the extensive clinical method comprising medical history, clinical examination, and ancillary investigation followed by an assessment of strength of the body as well as diseases to generate systemic approach for the management of any diseases. These approaches indicate that each individual is unique and independent in terms of physical and physiological characteristics. *Charakokta Dashavidha* and *Sushrutokta dwadashavidha* are the two approaches described to assess the strength of the patient and disease. The word Sara means “*Sara Shabdena Vishuddhataro Dhatur Ucyate*” which means that Sara in real sense is the essence or excellent proportion present in respective dhatus in the form of super quality; as a result, it provides strength (physical power, mental power as well as power of resistance against the diseases) and stability to the body. The Sara Pariksha is important because external appearances of plumpness and robustness may at times be misleading. While some people are looking lean and emaciated may actually be strong from within, hence one should not jump to the conclusion by seeing the outer appearance of an individual. Those looking hale and hearty may be disease prone due to inherent weakness in their *Dhatu* composition.

KEY WORDS: Avara sara, Madyama sara, Pravara sara, Sara pariksha

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda considers the life as gamut of the infinite consciousness, manifesting in four dimensions, namely Sharira (physical body), Indriya (senses), Satva (psyche), and Atman (soul),^[1] and these four-dimensional approaches described by ancient science presents a comprehensive concept of entity of life by its complex integration. In spite of the fundamental similarity in the mankind as a whole, we find differentiation from person to person. Hence, Charaka described ten factors, namely Prakriti (constitution), Vikriti (morbidity), Sara (excellence of dhatus), Samhanana (compactness of organs), Pramana (measurements of the organs of the body), Satmya (suitability), Satva (psychic conditions), Ahara shakti (power of intake and digestion of food),

Vyayama shakti (power of performing exercise), and Vayas (age),^[2] to ascertain his strength and the intensity of the morbidity.

Sushrutokta described twelve tools (Dwadashavidha Pariksha), namely Ayush (lifespan) if he has long span then his, Vyadhi (disease), Ritu (season), Agni (digestive power), Vaya (age), Deha (body build), Bala (strength), Satva (mind), Satmya (habituations/accustoms), Prakriti (constitution), Bheshaja (drug), and Desha (habitat),^[3] which should be examined to ascertain the Rogibala (strength of the patient) and Rogabala (strength of the disease).

The main purpose of sara assessment is to assess the strength of the individual and accordingly one should plan the line of treatment. One should not prescribe stronger medicaments to women, children, geriatric group, and patient having less strength. For example, if the Rogi Bala is good and if he is suffering from severe morbidity, then such patient should be treated with

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samshodhana (purificatory procedures) followed by samshaman therapy (palliative therapy).^[4] Considering the tools described by Charaka and Sushruta, one should advocate the medicine to get beneficial consequences. Both Acharyas gave emphasis to Sara Pariksha because external appearance of stoutness and sturdiness may at times be deceptive. Whereas some people appear to be lean and emaciated may actually be strong from within, those looking hale and vigorous may be disease prone due to inherent weakness in their Dhatu composition.

Besides this, there is much more basis to classify the individuals, among them Sara is most important. In Ayurveda, the field of action in treatment is regarded the patient and a great stress has been laid on the proper and systemic examination of the person. Examination of a person is for the sake of knowledge of his lifespan or measure of his strength or the interesting of morbidity.

CONCEPT OF SARA

Derivation

The term “Sara” is derived from the root Sr. Sthire with Suffix Ghan meaning essential, most excellent, best, true, strong, genuine, and vigorous.

Etymology

It can be defined as Sryate sthiribhavati yatra tatra Sarah, i.e., the thing which becomes stable is called Sara. Sir Monir Williams has also described the meaning of Sara as the essence or excellent part of anything, best part, and quintessence. Amarakosha has put two meanings of term Sara, namely Bala (strength or resistance to disease) and sthiransa (part of stability). Chakrapani has mentioned Sara as the purest form of Dhatu^[5,6] (tissue).

Classification of Sara

It is reasonably evident from the Chakrapani’s view that Sara concept is associated with the Dhatu concept. Each individual is composed of seven Dhatus (elementary tissue) in homeostasis state. However, it is established that the person differs

very much from each other at the level of the purest form of Dhatus because it varies from individual to individual accordingly the person is prone to develop or prevent the capacity to develop certain diseases. Hence, individuals on the basis of Sara have been classified into various categories depending on the predominance of particular Dhatu in the body in the form of their purest form and Satva Sara indicates observation of the preponderance of satvik quality characteristic properties in the body [Tables 1].

It is also obvious from Table 1 that the order of enumeration of Sara by various Acharyas is not alike. Charaka and Vagbhata have followed some sequences but the sequence is reversed by the Sushruta. Kashyapa has followed the sequence of Charaka and Vagabhata up to Shukra Sara, after that he placed Ojas Sara instead of Satva Sara which he placed at last. Varahamihira in Brihat Samhita has not followed any specific order. His sequence of Sara enumeration does not coincide with the other compendia. He has mentioned Twak Sara.

Importance of Sara

It is remarkable that Ayurvedic acharyas have demonstrated Sara for the assessment of Bala and Ayu of the patient. Bala means biological strength or power of resistance against the diseases; it can be linked with the immunity of the individual. As the predominance of particular Dhatu, the number of Dhatu Sara present in the body of an individual will be directly proportional to the power of resistance of an individual. That is why Sarva Sara individual has relatively higher resistance in comparison to Madhyama and Avara (Sara) individuals. The person possessing all the Sara, but predominating in one will possess more resistance against the diseases that may arise due to its absence.^[11]

It can be recognized that the person of particular Sara will have more resistance against the disease produced by the particular Dhatu. This view was supported by Kashyapa Samhita, i.e., Tvak Sara children have disease-free tvak and their skin is capable of rapid healing of wounds.^[12]

Table 1: Classification list of Sara according to different authors

Charaka Samhita ^[6]	Sushruta Samhita ^[7]	Astanga Samgraha ^[8]	Astanga Hridaya ^[9]	Kashyapa Samhita ^[10]	Brihat Samhita
Twak Sara*	Sattva Sara	Twak Sara	Twak Sara	Twak Sara	Meda Sara
Rakta Sara	Sukra Sara	Rakta Sara	Rakta Sara	Rakta Sara	Majja Sara
Mamsa Sara	Majja Sara	Mamsa Sara	Mamsa Sara	Mamsa Sara	Twak Sara
Meda Sara	Asthi Sara	Meda Sara	Meda Sara	Meda Sara	Asthi Sara
Asthi Sara	Meda Sara	Asthi Sara	Asthi Sara	Asthi Sara	Shukra Sara
Majja Sara	Mamsa Sara	Majja Sara	Majja Sara	Majja Sara	Rudhira Sara
Shukra Sara	Rakta Sara	Shukra Sara	Shukra Sara	Shukra Sara	Mamsa Sara
Sattva Sara	Twak Sara	Sattva Sara	Sattva Sara	Ojas Sara	-
-	-	-	-	Sattva Sara	-

*In Sara typology, the term Rasa Sara is not mentioned. It is described as Twak Sara, probably due to the reason that the functions of Rasa Dhatu are primarily and best manifested in the Twak. Dalhana clarifies that Twak means Rasa residing in Twak region.

Charaka has emphasized that, sometimes, the physicians may take a wrong decision only by seeing the body of the patient such as strong because of being corpulent, weak because of leanness, and very weak because of possessing small body. However, rationally, it is observed that some persons possess small body and leanness, but they are strong. They are like ants that have small body and look emaciated but can carry heavy load. Big and corpulent persons may have less strength than the lean and short body, like elephant having big and corpulent body possessing less strength than the lean and short bodies lion.^[13,14]

Questionnaire of Physiological and psychophysiological characteristics of different Sara Purusha:

Tvak Sara Purusha:

1. Whether the skin is unctuous, smooth, soft or clear or all the above or not?
2. Is there any history of skin disease in the past?
3. Whether the healing is slow or fast?
4. Whether the complexion of skin is attractive or appealing?
5. Whether the hairs are fine, less in number, delicate, not easily removable or not?
6. Whether the hair touch is soft and gentle?

Rakta Sara Purusha:

1. Whether the ears are unctuous, bright red colour or beautiful?
2. Whether the ears are soft to touch?
3. Whether the ears are delicate to touch?
4. Whether the eyes look slimy or dry?
5. Whether the colour of eyes is bright red colour or coppery red colour?
6. Whether the appearance of eye is beautiful or not?
7. Whether the appearance of the face is bright red colour or not?
8. Whether the skin of face is soft or rough to touch?
9. Whether the facial appearance is beautiful or not?
10. Whether the tongue is unctuous or ununctuous?
11. Whether the colour of tongue is red or coppery colour?
12. Whether the appearance of the tongue is attractive or not?
13. Whether the nose is slimy or not?
14. Whether the nose is unctuous or ununctuous?
15. Whether the colour of nose is red or coppery colour?
16. Whether the appearance of the nose is attractive or not?
17. Whether the lips are unctuous or not?
18. Whether the lips are red in colour or coppery in colour?
19. Whether the appearance of the lips is beautiful or not?
20. Palm and sole are unctuous or not?
21. Appearance of palm and sole are beautiful or not?

22. Palm and sole are bright red or coppery colour?
23. Whether the nails are unctuous or not?
24. Whether the colour of nail is red or coppery colour?
25. Whether the appearance of the nail is attractive or not?
26. Whether the forehead is unctuous or not?
27. Whether the colour of forehead is red or coppery colour?
28. Whether the appearance of the forehead is beautiful or not?
29. Whether the genital organs is unctuous or not?
30. Whether the colour of genital organs is red or coppery colour?
31. Whether the appearance of the genital organs is beautiful or not?
32. Whether the palate is unctuous or not?
33. Whether the colour of palate is red or coppery red colour?
34. Whether able to tolerate or face difficult situation or not?
35. Whether able to tolerate heat or not?

Mamsa Sara Purusha:

1. Whether the temporal region is musculature or not?
2. Whether the temporal region is stable, compact and steady?
3. Whether the forehead is musculature or not?
4. Whether the forehead is stable, compact and steady?
5. Whether the nape region is musculature or not?
6. Whether the nape region is stable, compact and steady?
7. Whether the eyes are musculature or not?
8. Whether the eyes are stable, compact and steady?
9. Whether the cheek is musculature or not?
10. Whether the cheek is stable, compact and steady?
11. Whether the jaws are musculature or not?
12. Whether the jaws are stable, compact and steady?
13. Whether the neck is musculature or not?
14. Whether the neck is stable, compact and steady?
15. Whether the shoulders are musculature or not?
16. Whether the shoulders are stable, compact and steady?
17. Whether the abdomen is musculature or not?
18. Whether the abdomen is stable, compact and steady?
19. Whether the axillae are musculature or not?
20. Whether the axillae are stable, compact and steady?
21. Whether the chest is musculature or not?
22. Whether the chest is stable, compact and steady?
23. Whether the wrist joints are musculature or not?
24. Whether the wrist joint are stable, compact and steady?
25. Whether the elbow joints are musculature or not?
26. Whether the elbow joints are stable, compact and steady?
27. Whether the shoulder joints are musculature or not?
28. Whether the shoulder joints are stable, compact and steady?

29. Whether the ankle joints are musculature or not?
30. Whether the ankle joints are stable, compact and steady?
31. Whether the knee joints are musculature or not?
32. Whether the knee joints are stable, compact and steady?
33. Whether the hip joints are musculature or not?
34. Whether the hip joints are stable, compact and steady?

Meda Sara Purusha:

1. Whether the appearance of complexion is excessive sliminess or not?
2. Whether the voice is melodious or not?
3. Whether the appearance of eyes are pleasing or not?
4. Whether the hairs of the head is abundant and unctuous or not?
5. Whether the body hairs are slimy or not?
6. Whether the nails are slimy or not?
7. Whether the teeth are slimy or not?
8. Whether the lips are slimy or not?
9. Whether the appearance of urine is slimy or not?
10. Whether the appearance of stool is slimy or not?
11. Whether the appearance of sweat is slimy or not?
12. Whether the plumpness (Brihatsharira) of the body is observed or not?
13. Whether the person is able to tolerate exertion or not?
14. Whether the habits of the person is delicate or rough?

Asthi Sara Purusha:

1. Whether the heels are robust or not?
2. Whether the ankles are robust or not?
3. Whether the knees are robust or not?
4. Whether the fore-arms are robust or not?
5. Whether the collar bones are robust or not?
6. Whether the chin is robust or not?
7. Whether the head is robust or not?
8. Whether the joints are robust or not?
9. Whether the bones of the individuals are firm or not?
10. Whether the nails are robust, firm and big in size or not?
11. Whether the teeth are robust, firm and big in size or not?
12. Whether the shoulders are robust, firm and big in size or not?
13. Whether the lower jaw is firm or not?
14. Whether able to sustain difficult situation with full of enthusiasm or not?

Majja Sara Purusha:

1. Whether the organs of the body is soft or not?
2. The complexion of the person is unctuous or not?
3. Whether the voice of individual is pleasant and deep rooted or not?

4. Whether the joints of the individuals is robust, long and rounded or not?
5. Whether the eye of the individuals is big in size or not?

Shukra Sara Purusha:

1. Whether the face of individual is gentle and cool or not?
2. Whether the appearance of the individual is attractive or not?
3. Whether the eyes of the individual is full of excellent pleasant look or not?
4. Whether the teeth of the individual is unctuous, firm, white, rounded, strong, uniformity distributed with elevated margins or not?
5. Whether the nails of the individual is unctuous, firm, white or not?
6. Whether the bones of the individual is unctuous, firm, white or not?
7. Whether the voice is melodious/pleasant or not?
8. Whether the individuals looks handsome, smart, beautiful with attractive personality or not?
9. Whether the buttocks of the individuals are large in size or not?
10. Whether the excessive desire for sexual intercourse or not?
11. Whether the individuals is liked by opposite sex or not?

Satva Sara Purusha:

1. Whether the individual is endowed with good memory or not?
2. Whether the individual is devoted to performs ritual activity or not?
3. Whether the individual is grateful to the helping person or not?
4. Whether the individual is giving importance to cleanliness or not?
5. Whether the individual is full of enthusiasm or not?
6. Whether the individual is skilled or not in performing any activity?
7. Whether the individual is full of courage to initiate activity?
8. Whether the person is free from sorrow or not?
9. Whether the gait of the individual is proper or not?
10. Whether the individual is firm and thoughtful in initiating in any action?
11. Whether the individuals is involved in auspicious ceremony or not?

The eight subtypes of sara may be assessed in terms of relative quality, i.e., Sarva Sara Purusa/Pravara Sara Purusa (superior), Madhyama Sara (moderate), and Asara/Avara (inferior), and their characteristic properties are as follows.^[15,16]

Sarva Sara/Pravara Sara Purusa - These persons have all the dhatus in abundance and of good quality. They are endowed with:

- Great biological strength
- Absolute happiness
- Endurance against difficulties
- Self-confidence in all enterprises, inclination, and benevolent acts
- Firm and balanced body
- Well-balanced gait
- Nature of voice is resonant, unctuous, serious, and high-pitched happiness,
- Supremacy
- Wealth
- Enjoyments
- Honor
- Delay of aging
- Low degree of pathogenesis
- Minimum diseases
- Numerous offsprings of identical qualities and longevity
- Full of great respect
- Attains success in all activities
- Great capacity to withstand the troubles
- Filled with wisdom and steadiness.

Madhyama Sara Purusa

Moderate amount of different Sara possess qualities of respective Sara in moderate degree and shows characteristic of Sarva Sara moderately.

Asara/Avara Sara Purusa

These persons, having least amount of different Sara, possess qualities of respective Saras in lowest degree and show none or least characteristics of Sarva Sara. Hence, all eight subtypes of Sara must be analyzed as Sarva Sara, Madhyama Sara, and Avara Sara by routine clinical examinations.

CONCLUSION

Sometimes, the physicians may take a wrong decision only by seeing the body of the patient such as strong because of being corpulent, weak because of leanness, and very weak because of possessing small body, but it is wrong, and hence, our Acharyas described the concept of Sara in detail to understand the proneness to disease, strength of the patient as well as longevity before prescribing any therapy to the patients. Hence, knowledge of Sara is essential to gain success in therapeutics. It stresses about personalized approach concept to disease management.

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