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Saara In Ayurveda: A Narrative Review Of Physical And Psychological Attributes

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Abstract

Introduction: Sāra Parīkṣā (assessment of tissue excellence) is described under Daśavidha Parīkṣā (tenfold patient examination) in Ayurveda as an important method for evaluating an individual's health status and susceptibility to disease. Sāra refers to the qualitative excellence of the body tissues (Dhātus), reflecting both physical and psychological strength. Classical texts describe eight types of Sāra—skin (Tvak), blood (Rakta), muscle (Māṃsa), adipose tissue (Meda), bone (Asthi), bone marrow (Majjā), reproductive tissue (Śukra), and vitality essence (Ojas)—each identified by specific clinical features (Lakṣaṇas).

Materials and Methods: This study is a narrative literary review based on classical Ayurvedic texts, Vedic literature, and standard Sanskrit lexicons, including Śabdakalpadruma, Amarakośa, and the Monier-Williams Sanskrit Dictionary. Descriptions of Sāra and its defining characteristics were systematically analyzed and interpreted.

Results: Each type of Sāra presents distinct physical traits and psychological tendencies. These characteristic features assist in assessing tissue strength, endurance, vitality, and mental disposition. The analysis highlights the clinical relevance of Sāra in evaluating overall constitutional strength.

Discussion: A clear understanding of Sāra characteristics provides a structured framework for assessing physical strength (Bala) and mental resilience. Integrating classical descriptions with lexical interpretations enhances conceptual clarity and supports more precise clinical assessment in Ayurvedic practice.

Keywords: Sāra Parīkṣā, Daśavidha Parīkṣā (tenfold examination), Dhātu, Constitutional assessment, Tissue strength, Ayurvedic diagnostics

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Introduction

Āyurveda recognizes individuality as a fundamental principle of health and disease. Each person is considered unique in constitution, resilience, and susceptibility to illness. This individuality is shaped by multiple determinants such as Prakṛti (constitutional type), Sāra (tissue excellence), and Saṃhanana (structural compactness) etc. Among these, Sāra represents the qualitative excellence of the body tissues and reflects both physical robustness and psychological strength. [1]

Assessment of Sāra forms an essential component of Bala–Mana Parīkṣā (evaluation of physical and mental strength), indicating the degree of excellence of the Dhātus that govern overall functioning of the individual [1]. According to Ācārya Cakrapāṇi, Sāra denotes the “Śuddha Dhātu” of the body, implying the purest and most refined essence of each tissue [2].

Classical texts describe eight structural types of Sāra: Tvak, Rakta, Māṃsa, Meda, Asthi, Majjā, and Śukra [2][3][4][5][6]. Ācārya Caraka further emphasizes Sattva Sāra, which, although not a structural Dhātu, is crucial for evaluating physical, psychological strength and emotional resilience. [3] Additionally, Ācārya Kāśyapa includes Ojas as a distinct expression of Sāra,

where due to lack of substantive evidence, a detailed explanation could not be ascertained. [8].

Charakacharya illustrates the importance of Sāra Parīkṣā through the analogy of a small ant capable of carrying a load far heavier than its own body weight [3]. We often misjudge an individual strength (both physical and psychological) based on outer appearance; such assumptions might not always be accurate. For e.g., A lean individual (Kṛśa Śārīra) may exhibit strong mental resilience, whereas a well-built individual (Bṛhat Śārīra) may possess comparatively low mental resilience. Therefore, gross anatomical measurements do not always reflect true vitality. Sāra assessment provides deeper insight into functional strength and psychological stability beyond outward appearance.

Thus, Sāra represents qualitative tissue excellence and plays a pivotal role in understanding both physical strength (Bala) and mental resilience (Mana).

Methodology

This study adopts a narrative review methodology. Classical Āyurvedic texts including Caraka Saṃhitā, Suśruta Saṃhitā, Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya, Aṣṭāṅga Sangraha and Kashyapa Saṃhitā along with their authoritative commentaries, were systematically reviewed. Sanskrit lexicons such as Śabdakalpadruma,

Amarakośa, and the Monier-Williams Sanskrit Dictionary were consulted to derive contextual meanings of technical terms. The collected descriptions were critically analyzed and synthesized to identify the physical, functional, and psychological correlates of each type of Sāra.

Review of Literature [3]

Tvak Sāra (Excellence of Skin Tissue)

Tvak Sāra refers to that which cover (Aavarna), denoting skin that envelop the body. Individuals with this tissue excellence typically present with smooth (Shlakshna as Aalingana), soft (Mridhu as Komala), well-lubricated (Snigdha as Sneha Yukta), and which imparts pleasantness to body and mind (Prasanna as Nirmala).

Fine (Sukshma), Less (Alpa), and having good follicular strength (Gambhira as well rooted) body hairs. Delicate (as of baby) skin and hair texture (Sukumara Loma and Tvak). Naturally radiating or illuminating skin (Saprabha Tvak). One of the key functional markers is rapid wound healing, suggesting efficient tissue regeneration and effective repair mechanisms (Sadhya Kshataprarohashcha as immediately at very moment).

Sa-Saarata (Benefits) includes, the one who always experience happiness (Sukha Upabhoga), always experience prosperity

(Aishwarya Upabhoga), always experience good fortune (Sowbhagya Upabhoga), endowed with intellect (Buddhi), knowledge (Vidhya), extreme joy (Praharsha), and live long and healthy life (Arogya, Ayushyatva).

Rakta Sāra (Excellence of Blood Tissue)

Rakta Sāra refer to imparting red colour (Ranjana) highlight highly vascular areas such as the ear, eyes, face, lips, tongue, palms and sole, nail beds, forehead, upper palate and genital organs. The complexion may vary from red (Raktavarna) or coppery (Tamra) or orange-reddish hues (Arunaabhasa), resembling the sunset. The dazzling bright appearance of skin just like the glow of the candle (Shrimadbhrajihnu).

Sa-Saarata (Benefits) includes happiness (Sukha), are stubborn by nature (Uddhataa), have strong mental power (Medha), generous (Manasvita) and tender (Saukumarya), doesn't possess physical and mental strength (Anaatibala), unable to tolerate torment (Aklesha Sahishnutva) and heat (Ushna Asahishnuta).

Māṃsa Sāra (Excellence of Muscle Tissue)

Māṃsa Sāra produced from blood body tissue (Rakta Dhatu). Individuals exhibit stable (Sthira), heavy (Guru) and properly formed musculature (Subha Mamsa Upacita) highly highlighted in

areas like temple region (Shankha), forehead (Lalaata), Raised part of neck (Krikatika), eyes, cheeks, jaws, back part of neck (Griva), shoulder, abdomen, armpit, chest, joints, hand and feet. The body appears well-built without depressions or hollow areas (Achidragatram) and well covered (Gudha).

These features collectively indicate good muscle tone and physical strength. **Sa-Saarata** (Benefits) includes, forbearance nature (Kshama), constancy (Dhriti), lack of greed/ restlessness (Alaulya), sincere (Arjavam), endowed with knowledge (Vidhya) and gained wealth (Vittam), physical and mental strength (Bala), stay happy (Sukha), and have long life (Dirgha Ayu).

Meda Sāra (Excellence of Adipose Tissue)

Meda Sāra refer to reflects balanced adipose tissue which binds body and which is produce from muscle body tissue (Mamsa Dhatu). An individuals exhibit an affectionate (Sneha as Prem) bodily texture that can be perceived through sight, touch, speech or auditory interaction. These qualities are visibly manifested in complexion, voice, eyes, scalp hair (Keshha), body hair (Loma), nails, teeth, lips and in excreta like urine and fecal matter.

They are unable to tolerate physical exertion (Aayaasa Asahishnum) and

often possess big size body (Bruhat Sharira).

Sa-Saarata (Benefits) includes, possess wealth (Vitta), prosperity (Aishwarya), are giver (Pradana) or serve by nature (Upachaarata). They are honest (Aarjava), tender (Sukumara), and dwell in Happiness (Sukha Upabhoga).

Asthi Sāra (Excellence of Bone Tissue)

Asthi Sāra represents structural robustness of the skeletal system. Individuals demonstrate prominent and big sized (Sthula) structures often visible in heel, ankles, knee, elbow, collar bone, chin, joints, lower jaw, bones, nails and well-formed/ strong/ hard/ fixed/ firm teeth. Often demarcated by big sized head and shoulder (Maha Shira Skanda).

Sa-Saarata (Benefits) includes, the one having excessive enthusiasm (Mahotsaha), perform various duties and work (Kriyavam), able to tolerate hardship (Klesha Saha), have firm, compact, strong body (Sthira Sharira) and live for long (Ayushmanta).

Majjā Sāra (Excellence of Marrow Tissue)

Majjā Sāra refer to that which reside or immersed inside the bones. Individuals exhibit soft (Mridu) body parts, often possess remarkable physical strength (Balavanta / Uttambala), unctuous as affectionate or tender or charming appearance of skin (Snigdha

Varna), soft spoken (Snigdha Svava) and deep and resonant voice (Gambheera Svava), big eyes (Mahanetra) and heavy, long, round shape joints.

Sa-Saarata (Benefits) includes, will live for long (Deergha Ayu), are mentally and physically strong (Balavanta), able to grasp knowledge just by hearing (Sruta Vijnana), possesses wealth knowledge (Vitta Vijnana), easily beget children (Apatyabhaaja) and are honored in society (Sammanabhaaja).

Śukra Sāra (Excellence of Reproductive Tissue)

Śukra Sāra refer to the final or last body tissue which is immortal or eternal in nature. Individuals often present with pleasant/ gentle by visuals (Saumya), pleasant eyes (Saumya Prekshina), milky appearance of eyes (Ksheera Purna Lochana), by nature exhibit extreme joy in abundance (Praharsa Bahula), unctuous, oval, white, well-formed (Saara), even and compact (Sama Samhata) appearance of top part (Shikhara) of teeth, whereas unctuous, well-formed, white qualities are also present in nails and bones.

The individual is endowed with pleasant, clear, bright, pure unctuous complexion and voice accompanied by a radiant lustrous skin texture (Bhrajishnu). They possess well-formed and prominent buttocks (Mahasphik),

along with heightened sexual vigor and inclination (Bahula Kama).

Sa-Saarata (Benefits) includes, they are desired by female (Stree Priya Upabhoga), show strong mental and physical resilience (Balavanta), endowed with happiness (Sukha), prosperity (Aishwarya), wealth (Vitta) and stay healthy (Aarogya). They get honored in society (Sammanabhaaja).

Sattva Sāra (Psychological Excellence)

Sattva Sāra represents mental strength and psychological stability. Individuals endowed with good memory (Smrtimanta), wisdom/ knowledge (Praajnaa), devoted (Bhaktimanta) gratitude (Krtajna), maintain hygiene (Shaucha)

They demonstrate excessive enthusiasm (Mahotsaha), brave (Dheera or Shourya), clever or skillful (Daksha), have tendency of conquering the challenges (Samara Vikranta), profound mind (Gambhira Buddhi), hardworking or well-planned or well-organised (Gambhira Cheshta) and devoid of depression (Tyakta Vishada).

They have organized/ stable gait (Suvyavasthita Gati) and are well-wisher (Kalyana Abhinivesha).

Discussion

The present review was re-examined with the help of available commentaries and Sanskrit lexicons to

facilitate deeper understand of Sāra Parīkṣā. As the manifestation of disease takes place in both body (Ashta Dhatu and Tridosha) and mind (Rajas, Tamas). This relation may be understood with the help of Ashraya (in which it reside/ provide shelter) and Ashrayi (one that get reside/ one who take the shelter) Bhava.

Tvak Saara

The word *Snigdha* is attributed to both *Twacha* and *Loma*. In the *Charakopaskara*, the term *Prabhayukta* is used in place of *Saprabha*, stating the same meaning as a natural radiance or shine that arises due to the presence of *Snigdha guna*. *Acharya Sushruta* offers a detailed explanation, identifying this quality with the first layer of the skin (*Avabhasini*), which is responsible for the visible melasma (*Chhaayaa*). *Acharya Dalhana* further elaborates that when observed closely, this layer reflects shade (*Chhaayaa*), and from a distance, it appears as radiance (*Prabhaa*). Smooth (*Shlakshna*) and Softness (*Mridu*) is attributed to both skin (*Twacha*) and body hair (*Loma*). Pleasant (*Prasanna*) indicates a condition that is pleasing and comforting to both the body and mind; while *Acharya Sushruta* uses the term *Suprasanna*, and *Acharya Kashyapa* refer to *Prasanna Chavi* and *Twak Aroga Rahita*, implying healthy and pleasant skin. *Vyanjana Chavi* refers to

well-defined features and *Acharya Kashyapa* explains it as clarity and sharpness of bodily features. *Sukshma Loma* describes fine or minute body hairs, where *Loma* generally denotes body hair. *Alpa Loma* indicates a lesser quantity of body hair, referring to hair density. *Gambhir Loma* describe hair that is deeply rooted. From these descriptions, it can be understood that in *Rakta Saara*, the hair is characterized as *Sukshma, Alpa, and Gambhir*.

The terms *Sukumara Twacha* and *Sukumara Loma* describe the delicate nature of the skin and hair. Here, 'Su' is a prefix meaning gentle, and 'Kumara' refers to a baby or young child; thus, the skin is compared to that of an infant for its softness and delicacy. *Sukumara Loma* similarly denotes fine and gentle hair. *Saprabheva Twacha* refers to the illuminating quality of the skin. Here the 'Sa' stand for 'with', 'Prabha' stand for 'radiance' and 'Eva' used for 'emphasizing', together stating as innate radiance. Here, the outermost layer of *Twak Avabhasini* shows this radiance in skin. The term *Sadya Kṣata Prarohasca* conveys rapid wound healing. *Acharya Susruta*, while explaining *Vrana Ropana* (stages of wound healing), describes *Praroha* as the final stage, during which the skin or tissue regenerates and normal structure and function are restored. This indicates

that wounds heal promptly following injury.

Rakta Saara

The word *Snigdha* denotes the unctuous quality. *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned as *Raktavarna* (imparting Red/ Kumkum like colour), whereas *Acharya Sushruta* mentioned as *Tamra* (imparting coppery colour), and *Acharya Kashyapa* has mentioned *Arunaabhasa* (imparting orange-reddish appearance just like evening sunset). Both these two qualities are strongly present in ear (helix and antihelix), eyes (at the corner), face (prominent features like cheeks, mental protuberance), tongue (apex and body), nose (tip and dorsum), lips (tubercles), hands (pulp and palm), legs (greater toe, met head pad, heel pad), nails (nail palate), forehead, genital organs and Upper palate of mouth. The term *Shrimadbhrajishnu* signifies a state of beautiful radiance which can be seen in skinned named *Avabhaasini* (reflects *Prabha* and *Chaya*). This explains the presence of a naturally glowing and lustrous appearance of the skin.

Mamsa Saara

The words *Sthira* (stable), *Guru* (heavy), *Subha Mamsa Upacita* (properly formed Mamsa) refer to the quality of muscle formation around the joints. These terms indicate that the joints are well supported, stable,

adequately nourished, and properly developed musculature, contributing to strength and firmness. A specific understanding of these features can be obtained by observing the muscle development in particular regions of the body. This includes the Temple region (Temporalis muscle), Frontal region (Frontalis muscle), Raised part of neck (Rectus capitis posterior major and minor, Obliquus capitis superior and inferior muscle, Semispinalis capitis muscle, sternocleidomastoid muscle, eye (superior and inferior oblique muscle, Superior, medial, inferior and lateral rectus muscle), Cheek (Zygomaticus major and minor muscle, Buccinator, Quadrilateral and Masseter muscle), Jaw (Masseter, Temporalis medial pterygoid, lateral pterygoid), Back of the neck (Trapezius muscle), Shoulder (Supraspinatus, Infraspinatus, Teres Minor, Subscapularis, Deltoid, Trapezius, Rhomboids muscles), Abdomen (Rectus abdominis, external oblique, internal oblique and transversus abdominis), Ampit (Pectoral Muscle, Serratus anterior, Teres Major and minor and Latissimus Dorsi Muscles), Chest (Anterior Deltoid, Pectoralis major and minor, Serratus anterior), Hand (Thenar, Hypothenar, Lumbricals and Interosseus muscle) and Feet (Abductor hallucis, Flexor digitorum brevis, Abductor digiti minima, Lumbricals and dorsal and

plantar interossei muscle), and all joints muscles. *Acharaya Sushruta* has described an additional quality of *Mamsa* as *Achidragatram* (indicating that the body does not have pits or depressions), and for joints *Gudha* (well covered and properly supported).

Meda Saara

The words *Sneha Varna*, *Swara*, *Netra*, *Kesha*, *Loma*, *Nakha*, *Danta*, *Austha*, *Murta*, *Purisha* are used to describe the presence of *Sneha* (unctuousness) in various bodily features. In this context of *Sneha Varna*, it refers to a complexion that evokes a sense of pleasantness and affection when perceived through the senses. It is praised for being bright, pure, and naturally radiant, similar to how clear water reflects light beyond itself. The term *Sneha Swara* indicates a voice that carries softness and affection, reflecting a pleasant and gentle tone. *Sneha Kesha* and *Loma* describe the natural lustre and healthy shine of the scalp hair and body hair, respectively. *Sneha Nakha* denotes the natural shine present over the entire surface of the nails, while *Sneha Austha* refers to lips that are naturally moist and healthy in appearance. The term *Sneha* is also applied for both *Mutra* and *Purisha*, indicating well-formed, moist, and exhibiting the natural shine; these qualities facilitate smooth and effortless evacuation of urine and feces.

Additionally, *Acharya Susruta* mentions *Sneha Sveda*, describing sweat as moist and naturally lustrous, further emphasizing the role of *Sneha* in maintaining normal physiological functions.

Asthi Saara

The word '*Stula*' denotes bones that are well-formed, properly positioned, and appear prominent on observation. In this context, heel bone (Calcaneus), Ankle bone (Distal tibia, Distal fibula, Talus bone), Knee bones (Femur, Tibia and Patella), Elbow bones (Humerus, Radius, and Ulna), Collar Bone (Clavicle), Chin bone (Mandible), all joints. *Acharya Sushruta* describes qualities such as firmness or stability in structures like the teeth, lower jaw, bones, and nails. Both *Acharya Charaka* and *Acharya Sushruta* consistently emphasize attributes such as *Stula* and *Dridha* in structures such as the nails, teeth, and bones. The terms *Mahashira* denotes an individual with a broad or large forehead and *Mahaskanda* describes a person with broad shoulders. Both the quality show prominence and demarcation in proportion to normal stature.

Majja Saara

The word *Mridu Anga* refers to endowed with soft body parts. The word *Balavanta* / *Uttambala* composed of '*Bala*' signifies strength and the suffix '*Vanta*' indicates being endowed with

that quality hence, describes a person who is strongest and possesses excellent physical strength. *Snigdha Varna* denotes a complexion that is oily or naturally shiny, while *Snigdha Svara* reflects a soft and pleasant tone of voice, demonstrating the unctuous quality in speech. In this context *Sthula* (heavy), *Deergha* (long), *Vrutakara* (round shape) type of *Sandhi* (joints) and these characteristics are expected to be present simultaneously rather than separately. *Gambheera Svara* indicates a deep, resonant voice, drawing an analogy with the depth and flow of water. In the context of *Mahanetra*, described using the term *Bruhuvihi Samaha* refers to eyes that are large and prominent, highlighting well-developed visual features.

Shukra Saara

In the context, *Saumya* refers to qualities that captivate the mind, are enchanting, or pleasing to the eye simply by observation. The word *Saumya* is associated with '*Prekshina*' means the who observe, behold or look. In this context of *Ksheera Purna Lochana*, the eyes are described as having a milk-white appearance that remains consistent throughout the day, even after strenuous activity. *Praharsah Bahula* denotes an abundant or overflowing nature of happiness, indicating a person with a naturally cheerful disposition. *Dasana*

the quality like *Saara* refers to the strength and hold of the teeth within the gums, whereas *Sama Samhata Dasana* indicates teeth that are compact and aligned without gaps. *Acharaya Sushruta* has given extra quality as whiteness of teeth. In the context of *Nakha* and *Asthi* certain qualities been mentioned like *Snigdha* (unctuous); *Samhata* (properly formed); *Shweta* (white). Here, *Snigdha* reflects natural shine, *Samhata* indicates proper formation, and *Shweta* corresponds to the color of the nail bed, which may appear light pink, pink-coppery, or pale reddish. These same qualities are applicable to *Asthi*. *Prasanna Snigdha Varna* refers to a radiant complexion that exudes a pleasing and graceful appearance, while *Prasanna Snigdha Svara* describes a voice that is both soft (*Snigdha*) and pleasant (*Prasanna*). The word *Bhrajishnu* signifies a glow resembling that of a lamp (*Deepaka*), referring to the radiance of the skin over the entire body. *Maha Sphik* indicates the proportional appearance of the buttocks relative to the body. The word *Bahula Kama* refers to excessive desire, longing, pleasure, enjoyment, sexual love. *Acharaya Sushruta* has introduced an additional *Lakshana*, where in *Bahula* state as abundant or excessive, and *Kama* as semen indicating a person exhibiting abundant seminal production.

Sattva Saara

The term *Smrtimanta* means one who is endowed with memory or *Smrti* (memory) while *Bhaktimanta* (devoted) or *Bhakti* (devoted) refers to those who demonstrate devotion through helpful actions, guided by their beliefs. The word *Krtajna* signifies a person who is grateful or acknowledges the support and contributions of others. The word *Praajnaa*, describes one who possesses knowledge, wisdom, or intelligence. *Shaucha* refers to cleanliness or purity, extending beyond mere physical hygiene to encompass *Vaak Shaucha* (purity of speech), *Mana Shaucha* (purity of mind), and *Kaaya Shaucha* (purity of body). The term *Utsaaha* in *Mahotsaho*, when combined with *Maha*, denotes an elevated or intensified state of enthusiasm, indicating exceptional zeal or high-spirited energy. *Daksha* signifies as one's inherent capability, competence, or power independent of any specific

Conclusion

Saara, as described in classical *Ayurveda* texts, represents the essence of the *Dhatus*. One of the specialties described by *Aacharya Charaka* is the inclusion of *Sa Saarata Lakṣaṇas* along with the *Saara Lakṣaṇas*. Through this article, a clear understanding of contextual meaning that are similar in nature in term are provided like as seen in *Snigdha*, *Sneha*, *Snigdha Varna*

object or task. *Dheera* and *Shourya* refer to one endowed with courage and steadfastness. In the context of *Samara Vikranta*, the qualities demonstrating boldness and competence in navigating and conquering challenges of life. *Tyakta Vishada* refer to devoid of depression while *Suavyavasthita Gati*, describes movement (*Gati*) that is proper, orderly, and well-organized. The word *Gambhira* is applied both to *Buddhi* and *Cheshta* indicating a profound, thoughtful mind as well as hardworking, well-planned, and well-organized effort. *Kalyana Abhinivesha* denotes engagement in purposeful and virtuous work with complete focus, reflecting dedication and determination in performing righteous actions.

By this explanatory review one can assess the predicting disease tolerance, recovery potential, and psychological adaptability in clinical practice.

Snigdha Swara, *Prasanna Snigdha Varna*, *Prasanna Snigdha Swara*, *Shrimadbhrajishnu*, *Bhrajishnu*, *Saumya*, *Soumya Preksheena*, *Praharsha Bahula*, *Vritta Saara Danta*, *Snigdha Nakha*, *Bahula Kama*, *Bhaktimanta*, *Bhakti*, *Manasvitam*, *Shoucha*, *Mahotsahe*, and difference in *Buddhi*, *Medha*, *Vidhya*, *Dhriti*, *Manasvitam* and other words like *Uddhataam*, *Shruta Vijyana*, *Vitta*

Vijyana etc. The clarity on physical and psychological traits obtained through this article provides a conclusive understanding of each term, thereby enabling a better interpretation of the attributes associated with each *Saara*

Lakshana by enhancing *Bala* and *Mana Pareeksha*. Structured presentation of *Saara Lakshana* may improve diagnostic precision and integrative clinical application.

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