

REVIEW ARTICLE

Dhatu Sarata in *Rachana Sharir*: An Anatomical Study of Structural Strength of the Human Body

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda explains the structural strength of the human body through visible form as well as through the quality of *Sharirik Dhatu* (qualitative form of bodily tissues). Acharyas describe this quality of bodily tissues (*Dhatu*) as *Dhatu Sarata*, a concept that is given in classical texts. With the help of this concept, assessment of strength (*Bala*) and stability (*Samhanan*) of the human body can be done. In *Rachana Sharir*, *Dhatu Sarata* gives proper information on compactness, resilience, and resistance of body tissues, which are responsible for the physical strength of an individual. The present study examines *Dhatu Sarata* through a *Rachana Sharir* (anatomical) perspective through critical analysis of descriptions found in classical texts (*Charak Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtang Hridayam*), along with relevant observations reported in contemporary Ayurvedic research. This study highlights *Dhatu Sarata* as an indicator of structural strength and stability of the human body and explains that the variation in the strength and stability of the individual depends on the *Dhatu Sarata*.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, *Acharya* describes the structure of the human body not only through visible parts or different arrangements of the organs of the body, but also gives equal importance to the quality of bodily tissues (*Dhatu*) that form and support these structures. This idea of *Dhatu Sarata* is repeatedly mentioned in classical texts, although it is not always expressed in a single, uniform definition. *Dhatu Sarata* is a concept that emerges from classical texts and is closely related to the understanding of strength (*bala*) and stability of the body.^[1]

Individuals of similar height, weight, and body build do not show the same physical strength, endurance, or resistance against any disease. *Acharya*, in a classical text, points out this type of variation and clearly states that external body appearance alone is not a reliable indicator of the strength of an individual. This observation appears simple, yet it carries significant anatomical and clinical implications. *Dhatu Sarata* focuses on the internal quality of tissues (*Dhatu*) to explain these types of variations. From the perspective of *Rachana Sharir*, this approach shifts attention from static anatomy to living structure. It suggests that the body should be understood not only

by what is seen, but also by how well its tissues can sustain function over time.^[2]

1.1. Aims

This article aims to understand and explain the concept of *Dhatu Sarata* from the *Rachana Sharir* perspective, and to explore how structural strength and stability of the body relate to *Dhatu Sarata*.

1.2. Objectives

1. To study the descriptions of *Dhatu Sarata* available in major classical Ayurvedic texts such as *Charak Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*.
2. To examine the relevance of *Dhatu Sarata* in *Rachana Sharir*, particularly in relation to structural strength, compactness, and tissue stability.
3. To highlight the practical and clinical importance of *Dhatu Sarata* in explaining individual variation in bodily strength and resistance.

2. METHODOLOGY

Classical references were collected from standard Ayurvedic texts, including *Charak Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtang Hridaya*, along with their commonly accepted commentaries. Relevant portions

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from *Sharir Sthana*, *Vimana Sthana*, and allied sections were studied carefully.

In addition, previously published research articles related to *Dhatu Sarata*, *Sara Pariksha*, *Bala*, and physical strength were reviewed from recognized Ayurvedic journals.

2.1. Conceptual Basis of *Dhatu Sarata*

Classical Ayurvedic texts describe the human body as made up of seven *dhatu*s, namely *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja*, and *Shukra*. These *dhatu*s are not presented as independent entities; rather, they are understood as sequentially formed tissues, each depending upon the proper nourishment of the preceding one. Because of this sequence, the quality of any *dhatu* cannot be judged in isolation.^[3]

In Ayurvedic classical texts, *Sara* is usually defined as the most refined and stable form of the *Dhatu* (tissue). It does not merely imply an abundance of tissue but indicates proper formation, nourishment, and functional adequacy. Commentators explain *sara* as that portion of the *dhatu* which provides strength, stability, and resistance to decay. In this sense, *Dhatu Sarata* reflects long-standing tissue health rather than a temporary or superficial condition.^[4]

From an anatomical perspective, *Dhatu Sarata* may be understood as an indicator of tissue competence. While modern anatomy often focuses on structure and measurement, Ayurvedic anatomy places importance on how well a tissue can sustain its role over time. *Dhatu Sarata*, therefore, represents a qualitative dimension of bodily structure that is central to understanding strength and endurance.

2.2. Classical Description of *Dhatu Sarata*

2.2.1. *Charak Samhita*

Acharya Charak explains *Sara* under one of the *Dashvidha Pariksha*. Assessment of strength should include evaluation of *dhatu* quality. According to *Charak*, individuals possessing *sara dhatu*s have good tolerance to physical exertion, resistance to disease, and stability of body functions. *Charak*'s description suggests that *Dhatu Sarata* is closely related to functional anatomy. Strength is seen as a manifestation of internal tissue excellence rather than external form.

2.2.2. *Sushrut Samhita*

Sushrut does not describe *Dhatu Sarata* under a separate heading, yet his anatomical and surgical descriptions reflect the same underlying principles. Emphasis on firmness, compactness, and resistance of tissues is evident throughout *Sharir Sthana* and *Chikitsa Sthana*. For a surgeon, understanding tissue quality was essential, and *Sushruta*'s observations indirectly support the concept of *Sarata*.

2.2.3. *Ashtang Hridaya*

Vagbhata explains *Dhatu Sarata* in clinical assessment and prognosis in a concise manner. *Dhatu Sarata* is associated with vitality, endurance, and tolerance to therapeutic procedures. His approach reinforces the idea that anatomical structure must be evaluated along with tissue quality, especially when estimating strength and treatment outcomes.^[5]

2.3. Classification of *Dhatu Sarata*

Acharya Charak, in the eighth chapter of *Vimanshana*, describes eight forms of *Dhatu Sarata*, which are regarded as crucial factors for evaluating a person's physiological, psychological, and physical constitution. *Rasa Sara*, *Rakta Sara*, *Mamsa Sara*, *Meda Sara*, *Asthi Sara*, *Majja Sara*, *Shukra Sara*, and *Sattva Sara* are among them. Each *Sara*'s description encompasses both internal functional strength and external physical characteristics.

Acharya Charak goes on to say that *Sarva sara Purusha*, who is considered the best among people in terms of strength, resistance, longevity, and general excellence, is a person who possesses the best qualities of all *dhatu*s. On the other hand, people who exhibit weak or poorly expressed *dhatu* characteristics are referred to as *Asara*, which denotes weakness and susceptibility to illness. *Madhyama Sara*, which stands for intermediate structural and functional stability, is the state that falls between these two extremes. In addition, *Acharya Sushrut* has developed eight varieties of *sara*, mostly for evaluating the patient's *Ayu* (life expectancy) and *Bala* (strength).

In the 28th chapter, *Acharya Kashyap* discusses all forms of *sara* and also mentions *Ojas Sara*, emphasizing the importance of immunity and vitality.^[6] The eightfold classification of *sara* has been acknowledged and developed by both *Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Ashtang Hridaya* in their respective chapters of *Sharirsthana*.^[7,8] *Acharya Vagbhata* has eloquently described the significance of *sara* in evaluating *Bala*, emphasizing that it goes beyond physical size by drawing comparisons between people and animals such as lions and elephants.

2.4. Types of *Dhatu Sarata*, Its Unique Characteristics, and Anatomical Correlates

Classical texts describe different types of *Dhatu Sarata* based on the predominance of excellence in a particular tissue.^[6-8] These descriptions are primarily clinical, yet they carry anatomical implications. When interpreted carefully, they offer insight into how specific tissues contribute to structural stability and overall strength.

2.5. Structural Strength and *Dhatu Sarata*

In Ayurveda, structural strength is described when all *Dhatu*s function together rather than as a single tissue. It is usually understood as something that emerges when all *dhatu*s function together. *Mamsa Dhatu* and *Asthi Dhatu* are often highlighted for the strength of the individual because they are directly visible and related to posture and movement. However, their role cannot be considered independently. Without proper nourishment from *Rasa* and *Rakta*, muscular or skeletal strength does not remain stable for long.

In physical terms, the contribution of *Meda Dhatu* and *Majja Dhatu* is more difficult to describe because these *dhatu*s do not clearly express themselves through outward appearance. During periods of stress, fatigue, or recovery, when flexibility and internal support become important, their effect is noticed. In clinical settings, these features are often appreciated through observation rather than measurement.

The effect of one *Dhatu* on another is difficult to assess directly in clinical practice. Some features of different *Dhatu*s overlap, while others are not clearly defined. Therefore, the assessment of *Dhatu Sarata* depends largely on the clinician's experience and judgment. Although this may appear subjective, it reflects the complex and dynamic nature of the human body rather than a limitation of Ayurvedic principles.

2.6. Integration of Contemporary Research

In recent years, few observational studies have attempted to relate *Dhatu Sarata* with endurance, work capacity, and physical performance. The results of most of these studies report that individuals assessed as having *Uttama Sarata* have more power to tolerate exertion better and recover with fewer complaints. However, the criteria used for assessment vary between studies, and conclusions remain cautious.

Findings associated with *Mamsa Dhatu* and *Asthi Dhatu* commonly highlight better muscle firmness and enhanced joint stability. Although these observations parallel classical descriptions, they should not be directly interpreted in terms of modern anatomical or biomechanical measures, as such equivalence would be inaccurate. Instead, they point toward a broader principle that the inherent quality of tissues influences physical strength. This understanding is in line with the Ayurvedic approach, which gives greater importance to qualitative assessment rather than relying only on numerical data or isolated structural measurements.

3. DISCUSSION

While discussing *Dhatu Sarata* in relation to *Rachana Sharir*, Ayurvedic anatomy does not explain structures separately from their functions. *Acharya* describes the body as a system of tissues, where tissues continuously support each other. Because of this, the strength of the body does not depend only on a single *Dhatu*, even though some *Dhatus*, such as *Asthi* and *Mamsa*, seem to be dominant in providing physical strength.

Individuals who appear strong with their musculature may still complain of early fatigue, muscular strain, etc., whereas other individuals with moderate build tolerate physical strain and exertion better than strong-muscled individuals. It explains that physical strength is not so straightforward and does not directly depend on the external appearance of an individual. Such observations are frequently mentioned in classical explanations of *Sarata*, though not always in obvious anatomical terms. Here, tissues such as *Majja* and *Meda* become more important, as they contribute to internal strength and stability, which may not be visible externally.

In classical texts, the functions of individual *Dhatus* are explained in detail with the signs of *Sarata*. Classical texts repeatedly emphasize the nourishment sequence and the interdependence of *Dhatu*. Any attempt to equate *Dhatu Sarata* directly with modern anatomical parameters must therefore be made cautiously, as oversimplification may distort the classical intent.

However, recent research on *Sara Pariksha* does offer encouraging findings, especially about functional stability and endurance. Despite their narrow focus, these studies indicate that the traditional focus on tissue quality is still useful today.

These traditional theories are partially supported by recent research on *Sara Pariksha*, especially when it comes to functional stability and physical stamina. However, it is still challenging to convert qualitative evaluations such as *Sarata* into strictly quantitative characteristics, and any attempt to do so runs the risk of being oversimplified. Modern anatomy tends to study the body in separate parts rather than as a whole, so it is difficult to extend these connections without losing the subtle understanding present in classical Ayurvedic concepts. However, *Dhatu Sarata* is a useful interpretive tool for understanding why structural strength varies among individuals despite apparent anatomical similarities.^[9]

3.1. Clinical Implications of *Dhatu Sarata* in *Rachana Sharir*

In areas such as assessment of physical strength, immunity, tolerance, and prognosis, understanding *Dhatu Sarata* has important clinical implications. In Ayurvedic practice, evaluation of *Sarata* and knowledge of *Dhatu Sarata* help the physician to examine an individual's ability to withstand disease, surgical procedures, or intensive therapeutic interventions such as *Panchakarma*.^[10] From the perspective of *Rachana Sharir*, this assessment provides insight into

the underlying quality of tissues rather than relying solely on external body habitus.

In musculoskeletal disorders, if a physician knows *Mamsa* and *Asthi Dhatu Sarata*, it may help the physician to predict the response of an individual to therapy, recovery time, and recurrence of the disease.^[11] Patients with inferior *Sarata* require more supportive measures and care; they cannot tolerate any intensive interventions, whereas those with superior *Sarata* (quality of tissues) can tolerate intensive interventions and give a good response to them. Similarly, individuals with *Meda* and *Majja Sarata* have good joint stability, health, coordination, and susceptibility to degenerative changes.^[12]

Dhatu Sarata is important in preventive medicine. If an individual has superior *Dhatu Sarata* (tissue quality), they can also fight against the disease in the early phase and prevent the disease from developing. Early identification of compromised tissue quality allows physicians to implement timely dietary, lifestyle, and therapeutic measures aimed at preserving structural integrity before overt pathology develops. In this context, assessment of *Sarata* aligns closely with the Ayurvedic emphasis on individualized care and long-term maintenance of health rather than disease-centered intervention alone.^[13]

Thus, correlation of knowledge of *Dhatu Sarata* with the *Rachana Sharir* (Ayurvedic Anatomy knowledge) enhances clinical decision-making by providing a functional and individualized interpretation of bodily structure, bridging classical anatomy with applied therapeutics. The *Dhatu Sarata* characteristics are presented in Table 1.

4. CONCLUSION

Dhatu Sarata represents an important yet often underexplored concept in Ayurvedic anatomy. Rather than describing structure only in terms of form, it draws attention to the qualitative state of bodily tissues. Classical texts consistently indicate that true strength depends on this internal tissue excellence and not merely on outward appearance.

The present study demonstrates that *Dhatu Sarata* is not merely a descriptive Ayurvedic concept but an important anatomical principle that helps to explain the structural strength and stability of the human body. From the perspective of *Rachana Sharir*, the body cannot be understood solely through its visible structures; the quality, nourishment, and integrity of the *Dhatu* are equally essential in determining physical strength and functional competence.

From the viewpoint of *Rachana Sharir*, *Dhatu Sarata* helps explain why structural strength varies among individuals despite similar anatomical build. It provides a functional interpretation of anatomy, where stability and endurance are seen as outcomes of proper tissue nourishment and integration. Although the objective assessment of *Sarata* remains challenging, its conceptual value cannot be ignored.

Dhatu Sarata may be regarded as a foundational principle that complements structural anatomy by adding a qualitative and individualized dimension. Further systematic study may help clarify its application without reducing the depth of the classical perspective.

The correlation of *Dhatu Sarata* with *Rachana Sharir* (Ayurvedic Anatomy) and clinical assessment supports physicians in developing knowledge or assessing health conditions on an individual level. While objective measurement of *Sarata* continues to pose challenges, its value as a conceptual and clinical tool is evident. Future research on the same topic may further refine methods of assessment without compromising the depth of classical texts.

In conclusion, *Dhatu Sarata* should be regarded as a core anatomical principle within *Rachana Sharir*, offering insights into structural strength that complement modern anatomy while preserving the holistic vision of Ayurvedic science.

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10. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data analyzed in this review were obtained from publicly available sources, including peer-reviewed articles, observational studies, and surveys accessible through databases.

11. DISCLAIMER/VIEW AND OPINIONS

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Table 1: Dhatusarata description and interpretation

Dhatu Sarata	Classical description	Anatomical interpretation
<i>Rasa/Twak Sara</i>	Smooth, clear, firm skin, rapid wound healing, happiness, intelligence.	Healthy layers of skin with elasticity, mentally strong.
<i>Rakta Sara</i>	Luster in eyes, face, lips, nose, sole, vitality, sharp intellect.	Proper blood circulation to every tissue keeps the tissue healthier and ready to fight against disease. Adequate circulation and tissue oxygenation.
<i>Mamsa Sara</i>	Well-developed temples, forehead, napes, eyes, cheeks, jaws, neck, and shoulders, equipped with firm, heavy, good-looking muscles.	Gives proper muscular support to the body and maintains posture.
<i>Meda Sara</i>	Softness with stability, urine and feces are unctuous, as are the complexion, voice, eyes, hair, skin, nails, teeth, and head.	Gives more protective padding and cushioning to the joints and keeps joints healthy.
<i>Asthi Sara</i>	Strong, prominent bones, joints, heels, ankles, knees, elbows, collar bones, and chin heads are all noticeable.	Good bone health provides skeletal strength and load-bearing.
<i>Majja Sara</i>	Compactness, fullness, long, rounded joints, a robust, buttery complexion, a beautiful voice, and soft organs.	Internal cohesion and coordination in the body.
<i>Shukra Sara</i>	Compact body, vitality, soft, round, firm, compact teeth, a lovely appearance, and eyes that seem to be full of milk.	Regenerative and sustaining capacity.
<i>Satva Sara</i>	Mental steadiness	Indirect support for physical endurance.