Asthi Dhatu and Its Applied Anatomy & Physiology: An Integrative Review from Ayurvedic and Modern Perspectives

Dr. Manoj R Vyas
Professor, Rachana Sharir Department, MUP's Ayurved College, Hospital & Research Centre, Risod, Washim - 444506

***Abstract*—Asthi Dhatu is the fifth of the seven fundamental body tissues described in Ayurveda and is responsible for providing structural support, protection, and stability to the human body. It forms the skeletal framework and serves as the seat of Majja Dhatu. The formation and nourishment of Asthi Dhatu occur through the process of Dhatu Parinama, where Meda Dhatu undergoes metabolic transformation through the action of Asthyagni. Classical Ayurvedic texts also describe Asthivaha Srotas, which are responsible for the transportation and nourishment of bone tissue. In modern anatomy and physiology, bones constitute the skeletal system that performs essential functions such as structural support, protection of vital organs, mineral storage, hematopoiesis, and movement. Bone is a dynamic tissue composed of mineralized matrix and specialized cells including osteoblasts, osteocytes, and osteoclasts. Although Ayurvedic and modern medical sciences use different terminologies, both emphasize the significance of skeletal structures for maintaining body integrity and physiological balance. This integrative review explores the concept of Asthi Dhatu according to classical Ayurvedic literature and correlates it with the anatomical and physiological understanding of bones in modern science. Such comparative analysis helps bridge traditional knowledge with contemporary biomedical concepts and enhances the understanding of skeletal health and disease.**

***Index Terms*—Asthi Dhatu, Asthivaha Srotas, Skeletal System, Ayurveda, Bone Physiology, Applied Anatomy**

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda explains the human body through a holistic framework consisting of Dosha, Dhatu, and Mala, which together maintain physiological equilibrium. Among these components, Dhatus are structural and functional units responsible for sustaining the body. There are seven Dhatus described in Ayurveda: Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja, and Shukra.

Asthi Dhatu occupies a vital position in this sequence as it provides firmness and stability to the body. It forms the skeletal framework that supports body posture, protects vital organs, and facilitates locomotion. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe Asthi Dhatu as the main factor responsible for Sharira Dharana, meaning maintenance of the body's structural integrity.

The concept of Asthi Dhatu includes not only bones but also structures such as teeth, nails, and hair roots, which are considered related to the metabolism of bone tissue.

In modern medicine, bones form the skeletal system, which consists of approximately 206 bones in the adult human body. Bones are living tissues that undergo continuous remodeling and perform various functions including protection, support, mineral storage, and blood cell production.

Understanding Asthi Dhatu from both Ayurvedic and modern perspectives provides a comprehensive insight into skeletal structure and function. Therefore, this review aims to analyze the classical description of Asthi Dhatu and correlate it with contemporary knowledge of bone anatomy and physiology.

AIM

To study the concept of Asthi Dhatu according to Ayurveda and correlate it with the applied anatomy and physiology of bones described in modern medical science.

OBJECTIVES

1. To review classical Ayurvedic descriptions of Asthi Dhatu.
2. To analyze the formation and metabolism of Asthi Dhatu.
3. To describe the anatomical structure and physiological functions of bones in modern science.
4. To establish correlations between Ayurvedic and modern concepts of skeletal tissue.
5. To discuss the applied clinical significance of Asthi Dhatu.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review study is based on a comprehensive analysis of classical Ayurvedic texts and modern anatomical literature.

1. Primary Ayurvedic Sources
   - Charaka Samhita
   - Sushruta Samhita
   - Ashtanga Hridaya

2. Secondary Sources
   - Standard textbooks of anatomy and physiology
   - Research articles related to skeletal biology

Information from these sources was compiled, analyzed, and interpreted to correlate Ayurvedic and modern concepts of bone structure and function.

II. CONCEPT OF ASTHI DHATU IN AYURVEDA

DEFINITION

Asthi Dhatu refers to the tissue that forms the structural framework of the body.

A classical statement explains its function as: Asthi provides structural support and maintains the stability of the body.

Formation of Asthi Dhatu (Dhatu Parinama)

Ayurveda explains tissue formation through the concept of Dhatu Parinama, which describes the sequential transformation of tissues.

Sequence of Dhatu Formation

Rasa → Rakta → Mamsa → Meda → Asthi → Majja → Shukra

According to this concept:

a. Meda Dhatu undergoes metabolic transformation.
b. The metabolic energy responsible for this transformation is called Asthyagni.
c. This process produces Asthi Dhatu.

The metabolic by-products formed during Asthi formation are hair and nails, which are considered secondary products of bone metabolism.

ASTHIVAHA SROTAS

Asthivaha Srotas are the channels responsible for the nourishment and transportation of Asthi Dhatu.

Mula (Origin)

According to classical Ayurvedic texts, the roots of Asthivaha Srotas are:

- Medas (adipose tissue)
- Jaghana region (pelvic area)

FUNCTION

Asthivaha Srotas perform the following functions:

- Transportation of nutrients required for bone formation
- Maintenance of skeletal integrity
- Regulation of bone metabolism

FUNCTIONS OF ASTHI DHATU

Asthi Dhatu performs several essential functions in the human body.

1. Structural Support - It forms the framework that maintains body shape and posture.
2. Protection of Vital Organs

Bones protect delicate organs such as:

   a. Brain (skull)
   b. Spinal cord (vertebral column)
   c. Heart and lungs (rib cage)

3. Facilitation of Movement - Bones provide attachment points for muscles, enabling locomotion.
4. Housing of Majja Dhatu - The cavities of bones contain Majja Dhatu, which corresponds to bone marrow.
5. Maintenance of Body Stability - Asthi Dhatu contributes to overall body strength and stability.

III. APPLIED ANATOMY OF ASTHI DHATU

Classification of Bones

Ayurvedic literature broadly categorizes bones into types resembling modern classification:

1. Long bones

2. Flat bones
3. Irregular bones
4. Cartilaginous structures

According to classical texts, the human body contains approximately 300 bones, including cartilage and developing skeletal components.

Modern Anatomy of Bones

The skeletal system in modern medicine consists of 206 bones in the adult human body.

Major Divisions of the Skeleton

Axial Skeleton

Includes bones that form the central axis of the body:

* Skull
* Vertebral column
* Rib cage

Appendicular Skeleton - Includes bones of the limbs and girdles:

* Upper limbs
* Lower limbs
* Shoulder girdle
* Pelvic girdle

IV. STRUCTURE OF BONE

A typical bone contains several structural components.

Compact Bone - Dense outer layer that provides strength and rigidity.

Spongy Bone - Porous inner layer that contains trabeculae and bone marrow.

Bone Marrow - Soft tissue inside bone cavities responsible for hematopoiesis.

Bone Cells

Bone metabolism is regulated by three main types of cells.

Cell Type	: Function
Osteoblasts	: Bone formation
Osteocytes	: Maintenance of bone tissue
Osteoclasts	: Bone resorption and remodeling

These cells continuously maintain bone strength through the process of bone remodeling.

V. PHYSIOLOGY OF BONE

Bones perform multiple physiological functions.

Structural Function - Bones provide support and maintain body posture.

Protection - They protect vital organs from mechanical injury.

Movement - Bones act as levers for muscles during movement.

Mineral Storage - Bones store minerals such as:

- Calcium
- Phosphorus

Hematopoiesis

Bone marrow produces:

- Red blood cells
- White blood cells
- Platelets

Correlation between Asthi Dhatu and Modern Bone Biology

Ayurvedic Concept	: Modern Interpretation
Asthi Dhatu	: Skeletal system
Asthivaha Srotas	: Nutrient supply and bone metabolism
Majja Dhatu	: Bone marrow
Asthyagni	: Bone metabolic activity
Sharira Dharana	: Structural support of skeleton

CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Disturbance in Asthi Dhatu metabolism can lead to skeletal disorders.

Asthi Dhatu Kshaya (Depletion)

- Weak bones
- Joint instability
- Hair fall
- Nail deformities

Modern Skeletal Disorders

- Osteoporosis
- Osteoarthritis
- Bone fractures
- Degenerative bone diseases

Understanding the metabolism of Asthi Dhatu helps in developing preventive and therapeutic strategies for skeletal disorders.

VI. DISCUSSION

Ayurveda describes Asthi Dhatu as the fundamental structural tissue responsible for maintaining body stability. Although ancient scholars did not describe

microscopic bone structure, their observations regarding skeletal support, protection of organs, and housing of marrow correspond closely with modern anatomical knowledge.

The concept of Dhatu metabolism resembles the modern understanding of tissue formation and metabolic regulation. Similarly, the Ayurvedic description of Majja Dhatu within bones parallels the concept of bone marrow and hematopoiesis.

Modern science explains bone as a metabolically active tissue undergoing continuous remodeling. This dynamic nature of bone metabolism can be conceptually compared with Asthyagni, which regulates the formation and maintenance of Asthi Dhatu.

Thus, integrating Ayurvedic knowledge with modern biomedical understanding provides a holistic approach to studying skeletal health.

VII. CONCLUSION

Asthi Dhatu is a vital structural tissue described in Ayurveda that forms the framework of the human body and maintains stability and protection of vital organs. Modern anatomy similarly recognizes bones as dynamic structures responsible for support, movement, mineral storage, and blood cell formation. Despite differences in terminology and conceptual framework, both Ayurvedic and modern sciences emphasize the critical role of skeletal structures in maintaining overall health. Integrating classical Ayurvedic principles with contemporary anatomical and physiological knowledge enhances the understanding of bone biology and contributes to a broader perspective in medical research and clinical practice.

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