

## A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF SHILAJATU- AN IMPORTANT DRUG IN AYURVEDA

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### ABSTRACT

The ancient scholars of *Ayurveda* and Indian alchemy had claimed that the *shilajatu* (black bitumen) has all the medicinal properties of Rasa (mercury), *maharasa*, *uparasa*, gemstone, metal. *Acharya Charaka* had included it in *Rasayana* (Rejuvenating drugs) *Maharshi Sushruta* told that there is no disease which cannot be treated by *shilajatu*. So, according to the *acharyas* one can win various disease, old age as well as death by administration of purified *shilajatu*. There are several types and criteria of best verity of *shilajatu* were mentioned in *Brihatrayee* but the purification method was incorporated in *Astanga Hridaya* and in Indian alchemy period 7<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> century. There are many different methods of purification to increase its therapeutic efficacy.

**KEYWORDS:** *Shilajatu*, *Rasayana* (Rejuvenating drugs), *Rasashastra*

### INTRODUCTION

*Ayurvedic* system of medicine is the only one out of all traditional medicine system of various civilizations were importance of metals for curing ailments was probably first recognized<sup>1</sup>. Since centuries the use of metals and minerals in therapeutics in the form of *Rasayoga* has been in practice in *Ayurveda*. However their use has been flourished only after the development of *Rasashastra*. *Shilajatu* is such a miracle drug, which has the property of all the rasaousadhi. The *Vedas* are silent about the topic of *Shilajatu* but the references are found in *Puranas*, Indus valley civilization and even in *Kautiliya Arthashastra*. The author of *Brihat Rasaraja Sundara* mentions about *Shilajatu*, as quoted in *Puranas*. Among the different *Rasa*

*dravyas* mentioned in the context of *Rasayana* in *Brihatrayi* no drug has been given so much importance as *Shilajatu*<sup>2</sup> All the information about *shilajatu* was collected and compiled from the *samhitas* and *rasa* classics. A critical analysis of the literally data was done in the present study.

### OBSERVATIONS

The followers of *Rasashastra* support this view by considering *Shilajatu* to posses all the properties and actions of *Maharasa*, *Uparasa*, *Ratna* and *Lauha*<sup>3</sup>.

### Mythological Origin:

Ancient texts categorically state that *Shilajatu* is a product exuding out of rocks in the Himalayan area in summer months due to the heat of strong sun. According to *Brihat Rasa Raja Sundara*, during the time

of *Samudra Manthana* friction was produced between *Mandarachala* and *Vasuki Naga* which were used for churning purpose by Gods and Demons. Due to friction some minerals were formed in

*Mandarachala Parvata* and *Shilajatu* was one among them<sup>4</sup>.

### Categorization based on *Rasashastra* Texts

According to *Rasashastra*, *Silajatu* is categorized in various groups as follows.

**Table no 1. Classical References of Shilajatu**

Sl. No.	Text Name	Reference	Group
1	<i>Rasa Hridayatantra</i>	9/4	<i>Maha Rasa</i>
2	<i>Rasarnava</i>	7/54	<i>Maha Rasa</i>
3	<i>RasendraChudamani</i>	10/1	<i>Maha Rasa</i>
4	<i>Rasa prakashsudhakara</i>	5/2	<i>Maha Rasa</i>
5	<i>Rasa ratnaSamucchaya</i>	2/1	<i>Maha Rasa</i>
6	<i>Goraksha Samhita</i>	<i>BhutiPrakarana</i>	<i>Maha Rasa</i>
7	<i>Rasaraja Lakshmi</i>	2/19	<i>Maha Rasa</i>
8	<i>Rasa Paddhati</i>	Verse no 38	<i>Maha Rasa</i>
9	<i>Rasopanishad</i>	4/4	<i>Maha Rasa</i>
10	<i>Anandakanda</i>	<i>KriyakaranaVishranti 1/48</i>	<i>Upa rasa</i>
11	<i>Rasa Manjari</i>	3/2	<i>Upa rasa</i>
12	<i>Ayurveda Prakash</i>	2/349	<i>Upa rasa</i>
13	<i>Brihat Yoga Tarangini</i>	43/2	<i>Upa rasa</i>
14	<i>Rasajala Nidhi</i>	Vol 2 Page 2	<i>Upa rasa</i>
15	<i>Siddha bhesajamanimala</i>	2/314	<i>ParadadiVarga</i>

### TYPES:

- *Shilajatu* has been classified in to six types since *Samhita* period while *Sivadas Sen* has included two more varieties. *Suvarna*, *Rajata*, *Tamra*, *Lauha*, *Vanga*, *Sisa*, *Manashila* and *Gairika*.
- According to *Rasa RatnaSamuchaya Gomutra Gandhi* and *Karpura Gandhi*. *Gomutra Gandhi* is again subdivided into two as
  - i. *Sasatva*
  - ii. *Nihsatva*
- In the commentary of *Rasendra Sara Sangraha*
  1. *Girija*
  2. *Usharaka*

1. *Girija* is again divided into 6 types based on the presence of metal in it.

- b. *Rajata*
- c. *Tamra*
- d. *Lauha*
- e. *Vanga*
- f. *Yashada*

2. *Usharaka* is again divided into two types

- a. *Kshara* or White coloured.
- b. Red coloured like fire.

### Tests for shudha shilajatu<sup>5</sup>

The drug is supposed to be authentic if -

- i. When put on fire it erects perpendicularly and burn without smoke.
- ii. When put in water through the tip of a thin glass it will come down slowly after spreading like fibre.
- iii. The pure *Shilajatu* should contain the smell of cow urine.

**Shodhana:**

Regarding *Shilajatu* different purification method have been described by different

authors. The table below shows the purification technique adopted by different texts.

**Table no 2. Various references for *Shilajatu* Shodhana**

Sl.No	Treatise	Purification method
1	<i>Rasarnava</i>	Cleaning with <i>kshara</i> and <i>gomutra</i> or <i>bhavana</i> with <i>triphala kvatha</i> , <i>goghrt</i> and <i>Bhrngaraja</i>
2	<i>RasaRatna Samucchaya</i>	Cleaning with <i>kshara</i> , <i>amla</i> , <i>gomutra</i> or <i>svedana</i> with <i>kshara</i> , <i>amla</i> , <i>guggulu</i> etc in <i>svedaniyantra</i> for one <i>ghatika</i> .
3	<i>Rasa paddhati</i>	Separation of <i>santanika</i> from <i>Gomutra Gandhi pasana shilajatu</i> & <i>bhavana</i> with <i>Asanadi gana</i> & <i>Salasaradi gana dravya kwatha</i> .
4	<i>Rasa Kamadhenu</i>	With hot water <i>prakshalana</i>
5	<i>Ayurveda Prakasha</i>	Cleaning with water to remove external Impurities
6	<i>Rasendra chintamani</i>	<i>Bhavana</i> with <i>tridosaghna</i> drugs for 7 times
7	<i>Rasa manjari</i>	<i>Bhavana</i> with <i>Godugdha</i> , <i>Triphala</i> , <i>Bhringaraja Svarasa</i>
8	<i>Rasa Tarangini</i>	External purification with hot water & <i>Triphala kvatha</i> , <i>Bhavana</i> with <i>Gomutra</i> or <i>Bhrngaraja juice</i>
9	<i>Charaka Samhita</i>	<i>Bhavana</i> with <i>Vataghna</i> , <i>Pittaghna</i> and <i>Kaphaghna</i> drugs for 7 times
10	<i>Astanga Hridaya</i>	<i>Bhavana</i> for 7 times with drugs according to <i>Dosha</i> & <i>Vyadhi</i> .
11	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>	<i>Bhavana</i> with <i>Salasaradi gana</i> for 1 time

**Marana:** In the *Rasaratna samucchaya*, 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter incineration of *shilajatu* given as, amount of *shilajatu* and subjected to puta of 8 cow dung cakes. *Suddha manshila*, *Suddha Haritala*, *Suddha gandhaka* should be mixed with equal

**Table no 3. Properties of *Shilajatu*.**

Variety	Rasa	Guna	Vriya	Vipaka	Dosakarma
<i>Svarna</i> <sup>6</sup>	<i>Madhura</i> , <i>Kashaya</i>	--	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Vata pitta hara</i>
<i>Rajata</i> <sup>7</sup>	<i>Kasaya</i> , <i>Amla</i>	<i>Snigdha</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Madhura</i>	<i>Pitta Vata hara</i>
<i>Tamra</i> <sup>8</sup>	<i>Kasaya</i> , <i>Tikta</i> , <i>Madhura</i> , <i>Katu</i>	<i>Laghu</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kapha Pitta</i>
<i>Lauha</i> <sup>9</sup>	<i>Kasaya</i> , <i>Madhura</i> , <i>Tikata</i>	--		--	<i>Kapha hara</i>
<i>Vanga</i> <sup>10</sup>	<i>Tikta</i> , <i>Lavana</i>				<i>Vatahara</i>
<i>Naga</i> <sup>11</sup>	<i>Tikta</i> , <i>Lavana</i>				<i>Vatahara</i>

**THERAPEUTIC INDICATIONS:**

*Shilajatu* by appropriate use acts as *Rasayana*, *Vajikara* and *Rogahara*<sup>12</sup>. *Shilajatu* is indicated in diseases like *Prameha*, *Kamala*, *Pandu*, *Mutrakrichra*, *Jwara*, *Agnimandya*, *Shopha*, *Yakshma*, *Soola*, *Gulma*, *Pleeha*, *Hritshoola*, *Twakroga*, *Medoroga* etc<sup>13</sup>.

**DOSE:** According to *Acharya Charaka*<sup>14</sup>

**Table no 4. Dosage of Shilajatu**

TYPE	QUANTITY	DURATION
<i>Uttama</i>	1 pala (4 tola)	7 weeks
<i>Madhyama</i>	½ pala (2tola)	3 weeks
<i>Avara</i>	1karsha(1tola)	1 week

100 pala for gaining *Pushti*, *Bala*, *Varna*, curing *Madhumeha* and longevity up to 100 years<sup>15</sup>

2 to 8 *Ratti*<sup>16</sup> depending upon the factor like age, strength etc

**Formulations:** *Arogyavardhani vati*, *Chandraprabha vati*, *Shiva gutika*, *Shilajatywadi vati* etc<sup>17</sup>

**DISCUSSION**

Now days in some business men adulterated the *shilajatu* with sand, gum, faeces of goat and bitumen and mixed with gum of *banjha* (plant). Sometime the purified *shilajatu* also available in market in some hilly region but no one mentioned the full process of purification (which may be harmful to health). The appropriate process of purification of *shilajatu* which is beneficial to health is already described in *Ayurvedic* literature.

*Shilajatu* is perhaps the most potent rejuvenator and anti-aging block buster ever known to mankind. *Shilajatu* is attributed with many magical properties. It is a potent Free Radical Scavenger due to its Antioxidant activity<sup>18,19</sup> Besedovsky et al,

1985 reported influence on endocrine, autonomic, and brain functional changes. Besedovsky discovered that these changes can be mediated by cytokines, released by activated immunologic cells<sup>20</sup> It has anti-stress activity and rejuvenator property<sup>21</sup>

**CONCLUSION**

It can be concluded that the ancient scholars of Ayurveda knew the importance of *shilajatu* as a rejuvenating medicine.

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