

A LITERARY REVIEW OF SHILAJATU

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ABSTRACT

Shilajatu is one of the *Rasadravya* (herbomineral drug) mentioned in the classical texts. *Shilajatu* is obtained from the mountain rocks in the form of exudate which oozes out in summer season. As per *Charaka Samhita* metals like gold and others are present in the rocks which receive the sun rays and secrete the exudates which is known as *shilajatu*. Ayurveda mentions it is wonderful medicine. *Shodhita Shilajatu* after *bhavana* can cure many diseases. In the present time *Shilajatu* is an important and irreplaceable place in classical text such as Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani medicine. *Shilajatu* is prescribed to treat *Mutravaha shrotas vikar, Kamala, Swas roga, Kasa roga, Medoroga, Prameha and Madhumeha roga*.etc.

Keywords: *Samhitas, Mutravaha, Herbomineral, Bhavana.*

INTRODUCTION: Ayurveda is science of life because its primary objective is to provide a happy and long life. Ayurveda also specifies the path towards attaining the ‘*moksha*’ with healthy, satisfied and happy life .In the fulfillment of these objectives, with the developments of different principle and sources of Ayurveda, principles of *Rasashastra* also originated. *Rasashastra* – the ‘*Rasa*’ word in the *Rasashastra* is used for mercury .The ability of mercury to dissolve any metals, make it to be called as “*Rasa*” .The science developed, by using this property

of mercury is called as *Rasashastra* .The detail description of *Rasa, maharasa, uprasa, dhatu*, etc. are mentioned in *Rasashastra*. The most important substance in *Rasashastra* is mercury. All other drug supports various mercurial processes. On the basis of use, it’s power and significance in mercurial processing, which makes the mercury very powerful. *shilajatu* is placed in group of *maharasa*.

Synonyms of Shilajatu

Shilajatu, shailey, shilaj, shaildhatuj, shilamaya, shilasweda, shilaniryas, ashmaj, ashmajatuk, girij, adrij, ashmotha, ashmlaksha, gaireya¹, etc.

Table 1:- Regional names of Shilajatu :-

Language	Names	Language	Names
Hindi	<i>Shilajit</i>	Malayalam	<i>Shilajatu klamd</i>
Bengali	<i>Shilajatu</i>	Tamil	<i>Arenegram</i>
Gujrati	<i>Shiajitam</i>	Karnataka	<i>Shilajatu</i>
Marathi	<i>Shilajit</i>	Unani	<i>Satva shilajit</i>
Telgu	<i>Shilajatu</i>	Emglish	<i>Black bitumen</i>
Dravid	<i>Uranyam</i>	Latin	<i>Asphaltum punjabium</i>
Sanskrit	<i>Shilajatu, girij</i>	Arabic	<i>Hajrool moosa</i>

In the present paper a review on *shilajatu* has been carried out compiling literature from various classical texts of Ayurveda.

In Pauranic age

According to the Pandit Shri Dattaram Chaube (author of *Brihat Rasa raja Sunder*) in Hindu mythology, deities and demons performed sea churning using *mandhrachal* mountain as churner and *sheshnag* as rope. Due to frictional heat, sweat produced from *mandhrachal* mountain which got mixed with *amrita*. Deities found this mixture as very divine medicine for the welfare of humans which got melt and converted in the form of *jatu*, so it is called as *shilajatu*².

In Samhita Period

Description of *shilajatu* is available from the *samhita* period. There are various legends behind the origin of *shilajatu*.

Charaka Samhita :- *Charaka* in its *chikitsa sthana* describes regarding origin of *Shilajatu* that when the mountain rocks, containing metallic elements in abundant quantity like gold,

silver, copper and iron are heated up then the lac like exudates, soft in consistency oozes out³.

Sushruta Samhita :- *Sushruta* in its *chikitsa sthana* specifies the origin of *Shilajatu* that due to intense and bright scorching heat of sun in the month of *Jyeshtha* and *Ashadha*, a gelatinous substance is secreted from the side of the mountains and this substance is known as *Shilajatu* and it cures all distempers of the body⁴.

Ashtanga Hridaya and Ashtanga Sangraha:- In both these texts no specific origin of *Shilajatu* is mentioned as compared to the *Charaka* and *Sushruta*.

Sharangdhar Samhita:- *Sharangdhar samhita* give detail description of *shodhan* of *shilajatu* with water, *godugdha*, *triphala kwatha* and *bhringraj swarasa*. *Shilajatu*, exudate from the heated rocks in summer, is collected and subjected to grinding in cow milk, decoction of *triphala kwatha* and juice of *bhringraj* in the sun for 1 day in each to purify it⁵.

Table 2:Types of Shilajatu on the basis of metallic content, according to different texts

Types	Charak	Sushrut	Ashtang hridaya	Brihad rasraj sunder	Rastarangani	Rasjalnidhi
Swarna Shilajatu	+	+	+	+	+	+
Rajata Shilajatu	+	+	+	+	+	+
Tamra Shilajatu	+	+	+	+	+	+
Lauha Shilajatu	+	+	+	+	+	+
Naga Shilajatu	-	+	+	+	-	+
Vanga Shilajatu	-	+	+	+	-	+



Image- Lauha shilajatu

In *Rasaratnasamucchaya*, Acharya Vagbhatta has mentioned two types of Shilajatu⁶

1. *Gomuta Gandhi Shilajatu* – it has two sub category (a) *Sahsatva* (b) *Nihsatva*
2. *Karpura Gandhi Shilajatu*

In *Rasajalnidhi*, Shilajatu has divided in to two types⁷

1. **Girija** – it is again divided into 6 types based on the presence of metal in it
(a) *Kanchana* (b) *Rajata* (c) *Tamra* (d) *Lauha* (e) *Vanga* (f) *Yashada*.
2. **Usharaka** – it is again divided into two types:
(a) *Kshara* or White coloured (b) Red coloured like fire.

Table 3: Varga in which shilajatu has been kept in different texts

S.N.	Name of the Text	Group
1.	<i>Rasa Hridaya Tantra</i>	Maharasa
2.	<i>Rasarnava</i>	
3.	<i>Rasendra Chudamani</i>	
4.	<i>Rasa Ratna Samucchaya</i>	
5.	<i>Rasa Prakasha Sudhakara</i>	
6.	<i>Rasa Kamadhenu</i>	
7.	<i>Rasa Jala Nidhi</i>	
8.	<i>Rasa Kalpa</i>	
9.	<i>Ayurveda Prakasha</i>	Uparasa
10.	<i>Bhava Prakasha</i>	Dhatu Varga
11.	<i>Kaiyadeva Nighantu</i>	Dhatu Varga
12.	<i>Shaligrama Nighantu</i>	Dhatuupdhatu Varga
13.	<i>Raj Nighantu</i>	Suvarnadi varga
14.	<i>Madanpal Nighantu</i>	Suvarnadi varga
15.	<i>Dhanvantri Nighantu</i>	Chanadanadi Varg
16.	<i>Sodhaal Nighantu</i>	Chanadanadi Varg
17.	<i>Siddha Bhesag Manimal</i>	Paradadi Varga
18.	<i>Sushruta Samhita sutra</i>	Ushakadi Gana

Chemical composition:- The *Gomutra gandhi shilajatu* is widely used as *Rasayana* and it consists of fulvic acid, dibenzo alpha pyrones, humins, humic acid, moisture, hipuric acid and trace minerals.

Properties of Shilajatu:- *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka, Karma* can be considered as the properties of the drug the texts like *Rasa Ratna Samucchaya* believed that *Shilajatu* possess all the properties of *rasa, uprasa, parada, ratna* and *lauha* together in itself.

Table 4: Properties of Shilajatu according to Charak Samhita⁸

Type	Colour	Rasa	Virya	Vipaka
Swarna Shilajatu	Like the flower of <i>japa</i> (hibiscus)	Sweet, Bitter	Sheeta	Katu
Rajat Shilajatu	White	Pungent	Sheeta	Madhur
Tamra Shilajatu	peacock throat	Bitter	Ushna	Katu
Lauha Shilajatu	looks like gum of <i>guggulu</i>	bitter, salt	Sheeta	Katu

Shilajatu is neither sour nor astringent. Taste becomes pungent after it is digested in the stomach. It has the merit of increasing the properties of the substance with which it is mixed “*yogwahi*” and

when taken internally it prevents and cures senile decay. It is also *vrishaya*. Shilajatu is mainly bitter in taste having *katu vipaka*. It possesses diuretic, *yogawahi* and *Rasayana* property⁹.

Purification of Shilajatu Table 5: Purification of Shilajatu in Rasashastra texts

S.N.	Text	Shodhan drugs with purification methods
1.	Charaka Samhita Ch.Chi.1/3/51	Bhavana with <i>Vataghna</i> , <i>Pittaghna</i> <i>Kaphaghna</i> drugs.
2.	Sushruta Samhita Su.Chi.13/10	Bhavana with <i>Salsaradi Gana</i> drugs.
3.	Astanga Hridaya	Bhavana drugs according to <i>Dosha & Vyadhi</i>
4.	Rasarnava Rv 7/21	Cleaning with <i>kshara amla</i> and <i>gomutra</i> or <i>bhavana</i> with <i>triphala kwatha</i> , <i>goghrita</i> and each drug <i>Bhringaraja Swarasa</i>
5.	Rasaratnasamucchaya RRS 2/117-118	Cleaning with <i>kshara</i> , <i>amla</i> , <i>gomutra</i> and <i>bhavana</i> with each of the following: <i>godugdha</i> , <i>Triphala kwatha</i> , <i>Bhringaraja swarasa</i>
6.	Rasa paddhati	Separation of <i>santanika</i> from <i>shilajatu</i> & <i>bhavana</i> with <i>asanadi ganas</i> & <i>salasaradi gana</i> drugs <i>kwatha</i>
7.	Rasendra chintamani	Bhavana with <i>tridosaghna</i> drugs.
8.	Ayurveda Prakash A.P 4/106	Cleaning with water to remove external impurities
9.	Rasa Tarangini R.T 22/ 79-80	Extraction of <i>Shilajatu</i> with hot water, <i>Triphala kwath</i> , <i>Gomutra</i> or <i>Bhringaraja swarasa</i> .
10.	Rasajalanidhi Method 1	Bhavana with <i>Triphala</i> , <i>godugdha</i> , <i>bhringaraj</i>
	Method 2	Bhavanans with each drug are selected according to disease

Method 3	Dissolve <i>Shilajatu</i> stones in water and collect the supernatant portion of fluid, then it is subjected to the <i>dhuma</i> of <i>agurvadi gana</i> and finally evaporate the liquid to get <i>santanika</i> with <i>vataghna</i> , <i>pittaghna</i> and <i>kaphaghna dravya's kwatha</i> .
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Test of Pure *shilajatu* Table 6: showing the test of *Shilajatu* as per various Rasashastra texts

Test	Reference
Becomes convex when put on fire	RRS, AP, RT, RChu, BBR, RP etc.
Smokeless on burning	RRS, RSS, AK, RT, etc
Releases rays in water	RSS, AK, AP, RT etc.
Soluble in water	RRS, AK, R. Chu etc.
Cow's urine colour	Almost all the authors believed this not as a test but as a property. RRS(1/107), AK(1/201), RT (22/82- 8), R.Chu (10/100), BBR 25 chapter etc.

RRS-Rasaratnasamucchaya, AK-Anand Kanda, RT- Rasatarangini, R.chu- Rasendra chudamani, RP- Rasa Paddhati, BBR- Bharatbhaiyaratnakara, AP-Ayurved Prakash, RSS- Rasendrasangraha.

Indication of *Shilajatu* Table 7: Different Formulations of *Shilajatu* and their Indication as per various Rasashastra texts

S.N	Formulations	Indication	References
1.	<i>Suddha Shilajatu</i>	<i>Sthaulya</i>	Su.Su 15/37
2.	<i>Shudha shilajatu</i>	<i>Kushtha</i>	Su.Chi 9/6
3.	<i>Salsaradi Gana bhavita</i>	<i>Madhumeha</i>	Su.Chi 13/10
4.	<i>Loha rasayana</i>	<i>Sthaulya, pandu, kushtha, prameha etc.</i>	<i>Chakradutt-Sthaulya rogadhikara 35-18</i>
5.	<i>Chandraprabha Vati</i>	<i>Premea</i>	Sh.M Kh.7/40-49
6.	<i>Mehabaddha Rasa</i>	<i>Premea</i>	Sh.MKh.12/203-206
7.	<i>Shiva Gutika</i>	<i>Rajyakshama</i>	Y.R. <i>Rajyakshama chikitsa</i>
8.	<i>Chandraprabha Gutika</i>	<i>Premea</i>	Y.R. <i>Premea chikitsa</i>
9.	<i>Prabhakar vati</i>	<i>Hrida roga</i>	B.R. <i>Hrida rogadhikara (40-41)</i>
10.	<i>Chandraprabha vati</i>	<i>Premea</i>	B.R. <i>Premea rogadhikara (92-94)</i>
11.	<i>Loha rasayana</i>	<i>Medoroga</i>	B.R. <i>Medo rogadhikara (35)</i>
12.	<i>Prameha kulanataka rasa</i>	<i>Prameha, kamala, pandu, Ashmari, mutraghata etc.</i>	B.R. <i>Prameha chikitsa 37-80</i>
13.	<i>Mehanathaka rasa</i>	<i>Prameha</i>	B.R. <i>Prameha chikitsa 37-146</i>
14.	<i>Shiva gutika</i>	<i>Pandu, prameha, ashmari, kushtha</i>	Chi. Kalika- <i>Kshaya chikitsa 274</i>

RRS-Rasaratnasamucchaya, AK-Anand Kanda, RT- Rasatarangini, R.chu- Rasendra chudamani, RP- Rasa Paddhati, BBR- Bharatbhaiyaratnakara, AP-Ayurved Prakash, RSS-Rasendrasangraha, BR- Bhaishajya Ratnavali, YR- Yog Ratnakar

Dose of pure shilajatu - According to Charaka :- Table 8: Dose of Shilajatu according to Charaka Samhita¹⁰

Types	Quantity	Duration
Uttama	1 pala (4 tola)	7 week
Madhyama	½ pala (2tola)	3 week
Avara	1 karsha (1tola)	1 week

According to Sushruta:

In *Sushruta Samhita* dose of *Shilajatu* is 100 pala for achieving *pushti*, *bala*, *varna*, curing *madhumeha* and longevity up to 100 years (thousand pala for attaining the life up to one thousand years¹¹).

According to Rasatarangini :

General dose is 2 Ratti to 8 Ratti (250mg - 1gm) according to bal and kal¹².

According to Ayurved Prakash : Same as *Charak Samhita*¹³

One who takes *shilajatu* for six month, observing all the regulations to be followed with regard to the use of medicines meant for the cure and prevention of senility, lives a happy and healthy life for 100 years.

Anupana: According to *Charaka Samhita Dugdha, Takra, Mamsa rasa, Yusha, Jala, Gomutra* and different disease curing *kwatha* should be used¹⁴.

Effects of taking impure shilajatu: If *Shilajatu* is not properly purified, causes burning sensation, syncope, Giddiness, hemorrhage, emaciation, loss of appetite and constipation¹⁵.

Antidote of Shilajatu: The disease due to use of impure *shilajatu* may be cured by taking *marich* (in doses of ¼ of tola a day) mixed with ghee for seven days¹⁶.

Incineration of shilajatu: According to *Rasaratnasamucchaya* if it is mixed with *manashila*, *gandhak* and *haratala* all rubbed (*bhavana*) together with the juice

of *matulunga* and then subjected to *puta* with a fire made of eight pieces of cow dung cakes¹⁷.

Ayurveda Prakasha followed the same process as that of RRS¹⁸.

Rasendra Chudamani and *Rasa Paddhati* believed that *Shilajatu* should be mixed with equal quantity of *Gandhaka* and *Hartala* and after triturating it with the lime juice it should be subjected to *kapota puta*. However R. Chu stated that *marana* should not be performed for *Karpura Gandhi Shilajatu*¹⁹.

Use of incinerated shilajatu: Incinerated *shilajatu*, in doses of 3 rati, mixed with an equal quantity of *kanta iron*, *vaikranta*, *triphala*, *trikatu* and *ghritam* should be prescribed in jaundice, anemia, pthisis, loss of the power of digestion, spermatorrhoea, piles, *gulma*, enlarged spleen, *udar roga*, all sorts of colic and disease of the vagina²⁰.

Satwapatana of shilajatu: *Shilajatu* is levigated (*bhavana*) with the *dravaka-varga* and some vegetable acid and heated in a crucible by a strong fire made of coal, which is to be blown by means of bellow the *satwa*, thus extracted, has the appearance of iron. it should be incinerated and applied in medicines in the same way as iron²¹.

Contraindication: While taking *shilajatu*, one should avoid fried food, roasted (with or without oil), sour, fermented and heavy in digestion. The man who takes *shilajatu*

should abstain from taking, once for all, *kulattha*, is as much as the latter can corrode even stone and has therefore a property which destroys the effect which *shilajatu* produces upon the human system. The man who takes *shilajatu* should avoid physical exercise, exposure to sun rays exposure to wind, things which trouble the mind, heavy food, foods causing inflammation of the body, i.e. food which is sour, pungent, fried with or without oil and causing burning sensation in gastrointestinal tract²².

DISCUSSION : As outlined above, results from various *samhitas* and different *Rasashastra* texts studies indicate *shilajatu* possesses many qualities, including *Kustha, Vata roga, Dipan, Pachan, Jwara, Osteoporosis, Pregnancy to infertile women, Strength, anti-inflammatory, antitumor, and immunomodulatory properties, as well as exerting an influence on the endocrine, nervous, and cardiopulmonary systems. According to the samhitas and Rasashastra texts shilajatu used in the various form or medium. Including arthritis and other musculoskeletal disorders, and hypertension. Effect of Shilajatu on the immune system, central nervous system, hemopoetic system, and general growth promotion to form a basis for further studies but not enough evidence to provide a firm scientific basis for definitive therapeutic uses.*

CONCLUSION : *Shilajatu* is a humus rich blackish –brown substance, which is having large spectrum of indications and serves as a potent tonic. Its source of origin is still under controversy but many researchers claim that *shilajatu* exuding from the rocks of mountains is basically derived from vegetative source. It is neither sour nor astringent and taste

becomes pungent on digestion in the stomach. *shilajatu* literally means ‘conqueror of mountains & destroyer of weakness’ in Sanskrit . In the ancient *Charaka*, it is described as a substance for which “there is hardly any curable disease that cannot be cured”. Traditionally it is also considered to increase vitality, cure diabetes, and in Ayurvedic medicine system of India, it is used against various diseases.

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