

Shilajit: A Literary Review

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ABSTRACT:

Known in classical Ayurvedic texts as *Maharasa*, *Shilajit* is a potent blackish-brown herbomineral substance often referred to as Mineral Pitch or Black Bitumen. During the summer, this sticky exudate naturally seeps from rock formations in the Himalayas and other high-altitude ranges.

Long celebrated in Ayurveda as the ultimate *Rasayana* (rejuvenator), it has been used for centuries to combat aging and treat a wide array of health conditions. This paper provides a comprehensive review of *Shilajit*, consolidating available data from various *Rasa Shastra* literary sources.

Key words: *Maharas*, herbominral, *Rasayan*, *Ras shastra*

INTRODUCTION

Shilajit is a significant substance in *Rasa Shastra*. grouped in *Maharasa varga*. *Shilajit* possesses the properties of *rasa*, *uparasa*, *suta*, *ratna*, *lauha*. In classical texts, *Shilajit* is considered as *Rasayana*². There is hardly any curable diseases on earth which cannot be

controlled or cured with the aid of *Shilajit*³. *Shilajit* has long been used for medicinal purposes.

The classical text *Ras Tarangini* 22/60-61⁴ lists several synonyms that describe its origin (rock-born) and nature (exudate):

- ***Shilajatu / Shilajit***: The standard names.
- ***Shilaja / Adrija / Girija***: "Born of the rocks/mountains."
- ***Shilameha / Shilasveda***: "Sweat of the rocks."
- ***Shilaniryasa***: "Exudate or resin of the stone."
- ***Ashmajam / Ashmajatukam / Ashmalaksha***: Referring to its stone-like origin.
- ***Shaileyam / Gaireya / Sheladhatuja***: Derived from mountain minerals.

HISTORICAL REVIEW

1. Charaka Samhita

The foundational details of *Shilajit*'s origins are meticulously documented in the *Charaka Samhita* (*Chikitsa Sthana* 1/3/55-56). In this chapter, the author provides a comprehensive overview including, its varieties & Guna-Karma, administration and Its unparalleled status as a *Rasayana* (rejuvenator)^[5].

2. Sushruta Samhita

The *Sushruta Samhita* (*Chikitsa Sthana* 13/4) aligns with *Charaka*'s views on its origin but adds specific seasonal context. It states that *Shilajit* exudes from the mountains during the intense heat of the *Shukra* (*Jyeshtha*) and *Shuchi* (*Ashadha*) months (typically May–July)^[6].

3. Ashtang Samgraha & Ashtang Hridaya

While these texts acknowledge the potency of *Shilajit*, they do not provide a detailed or specific description of its origin compared to the extensive accounts found in the *Charaka* and *Sushruta Samhitas*^[7, 8].

4. Rasa-Grantha (Medieval Alchemical Texts)

The origin and properties of *Shilajit* are further elaborated across various authoritative texts of *Rasa Shastra*, emphasizing its mineral importance as in *Rasa Ratna Samucchaya* (2/110)^[9], *Ras Tarangini* (22/62-63)^[10], *Anand Khand* (1/211)^[11], *Ayurveda Prakash* (4/94)^[12], *Rasendra Chudamani* (10/96)^[13], *Rasendra Chintamani* (8/218)^[14], *Ras Jala Nidhi* (Vol II, 1st Chapter)^[15]

Types Or Varieties of *Shilajit* According to different Texts as below:

Text	Varieties
<i>Charaka Samhita</i> (Ch.Chi.1/3/49) ^[16]	Swarna Shilajit(Gold) Rajat Shilajit (Silver) Tamra Shilajit (Copper) Lauha Shilajit (Iron)
<i>Sushruta Samhita</i> (Su. Chi. 13/6) ^[17]	Swarna Shilajit Rajata Shilajit Tamra Shilajit Lauha Shilajit Naga Shilajit Vanga Shiulajit
<i>Ashtang Hridaya</i> (As.H.U 39/130) ^[18]	Swarna Shilajit Rajata Shilajit Tamra Shilajit Lauha Shilajit Naga Shilajit Vanga Shilajit
<i>Ras Ratan Samucchaya</i> (2/111-113) ^[19]	Swarna Shilajit Rajata Shilajit Tamra Shilajit
<i>Rasa Ratan Samucchaya</i> (2/109) ^[20]	Gomutra Gandhi Sasatva (more potent) Nihsatva Karpura Gandhi
<i>Rasa Tarangini</i> (22/64) ^[21]	Swarna Shilajit Rajat Shilajit Tamra Shilajit Lauha Shilajit
R.S.S ^[22]	1) Girija Kanchna Rajata Tamra Lauha Vanga Yasha Usharaka 2)Kshara
<i>Anandkanda</i> (1/209-210) ^[23]	1-Gomutra Gandhi Sasatva Nihsatva 2-Karpura Gandhi
<i>Ayurveda Prakasha</i> (4/95) ^[24]	Swarna Shilajit Rajata Shilajit Tamra Shilajit Ayasa Shilajit
<i>Ras Jala Nidhi Vol II 1 chapter</i> ^[25]	Kachan Shilajit Rajat Shilajit

	Tamra Shilajit Lauha Shilajit Vanga Shilajit Sisaka Shilajit
Rasa Chintamani (8/220/222) [26]	Swarna Shilajit Raupaya Shilajit Tamra Shilajit Ayas Shilajit

Table: 1 Vrana, Rasa, Guna, Veerya, Vipaka and Karma of diffrente varieties of Shilajit

Type of Shilajit	Vrana ^[27]	Rasa ^[28]	Guna ^[29,30]	Veerya ^[32]	Vipaka ^[32,30]	Karma ^[33,30]
Swarna Shilajit	Japapushpanibha (red colour)	Madhur, Tikta	Sheeta, Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Katu	Vata-Pittashamaka Rasayana
Raupaya Shilajit	Shweta(white colour)	Katu	Sheeta, Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Madhur	Kapha-Pittashamaka Panduroga nashaka
Tamra Shilajit	Bahirakanthabha (blue colour)	Tikta	Ushna, Guru	Ushna	Katu	Kapha shamaka Lekhana
Lauha Shilajit	Guggulukabhasa (black colour)	Tikta, Lavana	Sheeta, Guru, Snigdha	Sheeta	Katu	Tridosh shamaka Rasayana
Naga Shilajit			Mridu Guna		Katu	
Vanga Shilajit			Sandra			

Table : 2 Shodhan Process According to Different texts:

Sr.no	Ayurvedic texts	No. of Bhavana required	Shodhana drugs
1.	Charaka Samhita ^[34]	7	Kwatha of Vataghna, Pittaghna, Kaphaghna Drugs
2.	Sushruta Samhita ^[35]	1	Kwatha of Salasaradi Gana
3.	Astanga Hridaya ^[36]	7	Kwatha according to Dosha & Vyadhi
4.	Ras ratna Samucchaya ^[37]	1	Cleaning with kshara, Amla, and Gomutra, then bhawana with each of the following dravya: Godugdha, Triphala Kwatha, Bhingaraja Swarasa, then subject Shilajit to Swedan Yantra containing Kshara, Amla and Gugglu for 1 hour.
5.	Rasendra Chintamani ^[38]	7	With kwatha of Tridosaghna drugs
6.	Ayurved Prakasha ^[39]	---	To remove external impurities, use water when cleaning
7.	Rasa Tarangini ^[40]	---	Triphala kwatha, Gomutra & Bhingaraj swaras
8	Rasa jala nidhi ^[41]	1	Method-1 Bhawna with Triphala Kwatha, Godugdha, Bhingaraj Swarasa
		7	Method-2 Bhawna with each drug is chosen based on the disease

		3	Method-3 Dissolve Shilajit in hot kwatha with nimba, Guduchi, and Ghrita, then evaporate the supernatant liquid to obtain Santanika
		1	Method-4 Shilajit dissolved in Triphla kwatha, then Dasmula Kwatha, Guduchi Swarasa, Bala kwatha, Patola kwatha, Mahuka Rasa, and Gomutra. Dry the above Bhawita Shilajit and Bhawana with the following pharmaceuticals as necessary, Astavarga, Satavari, Asvagandha, Vidari, Varahikand, Draksa, Jiraka, Salaparni, Rasna, Puskaramula, Dantimula, Chitraka, pippali, Indrayana, Chavya, Sugandh Bala, Katuki, Shringi, Patha, and Salsaradi gana
		1	Method-5 Shilajit is cleaned through bhawana with Kshara, Amla, and Gomutra
		1	Method-6 When dissolved with Godugdha, Triphla Kwatha, or Bhirngaraja Swarasa, Shilajit becomes pure
		---	Method-7 Shilajit should be combined with Guggulu, Kshara, and Amla and submitted to Swedan Yantra for 1 hour.

[58]

Table: 3 Dose Of Shilajit According to Charaka Samhita (Ch.Chi. 1/3/53-54)

Types	Quantity	Duration
Uttam Matra	1Pala (4 Tola)	7 weeks
Madhyam Matra	½ Pala (2 Tola)	3 weeks
Avaram Matra	1Karsha (1 Tola)	1 weeks

Table: 4 According to Ras Tarangini different Anupana of Shilajit is mentioned for different diseases. [62]

sr. no.	Anupana	Diseases
1	Shilajit + Madhu	Shukrbanda, Mutrakrichh
2	Shilajit + Dashamula Kwatha + Sita	Ashthilika, vata basti, Vatkundilika
3	Shilajit + Varunadi Kwatha	Mutraghata & Ashmari
4	Shilajit + Amritadi Kwatha	Mutraghata + Mutrakriccha
5	Shilajit + Sita + Karpura	Mutatita, Mutra jathara
6	Shilajit + Gokshura Kwatha	Mutrakricchta
7	Shilajit + Kakolyadi Gana	Virya vridhikar
8	Shilajit + Lauha bhasama + Swarna Makshika bhasam + Ghee + Madhu +Haritaki Churna+ Vidanga Churna	Rajayakshama
9	Shilajit + Viratarvadi Gana Kwatha	Mutrakricchra
10.	Shilajit + Sita + Ksheer	Pain due to Prameha
11	Shilajit + Gomutra + Shudh Gugglu + Shunthi churna + Pippali churna	Uruh Stambha
12	Shilajit + Lauha+ Swarna makshik bhasma	Rakt Sanjannam
13	Shilajit + Arjun Kwatha for 2 months	Hrid Roga
14	Shilajit + Agnimantha rasa for 2 months	Sthaulya
15	Shilajit+ Bhawna with Salasaradigana Kwatha	Sthaulya
16	Shilajit + Bhavana with Salasaradi gana kwatha and use with same decoction for 2	Madhumeh, Asmari, Mutrasharkara

	months	
17	Shilajit + Pippali + Pashanbheda	Prameha
18	Shilajit+Ela churana + washing of rice water	Mutraghata, Mutrakricchra
19	Shilajit +Kapoor	Kshata, Abighata
20	Shilajit + Lauha + Svarana bhasama bhawna with Sagarasa kwath	Masurika jvara

Table: 5 The following are contraindicated when taking shilajit:

Sr. no.	Text	Apathya
1.	Charaka Samhita (Ch.Chi. 1/3/62) ^[55]	Vidahi Ahara, Guru Ahara, Kultha
2.	Sushruta Samhita (Su. Chi. 13/19) ^[56]	Kapota mamsa, Kultha
3.	Ashtang Hridayam (As.H.U. 39/141) ^[57]	Kultha, Kakamachi, Kapota mamsa

RESULT & DISCUSSION

In this research synthesizes insights from various Ayurvedic Samhitas to provide a comprehensive profile of Shilajit. By examining its synonyms, origins, varieties, and processing methods—such as Shodhana (purification), Marana (incineration), and Satvapata (essence extraction)—alongside its therapeutic properties, dosage, and dietary guidelines (Pathya-apathya), the study underscores Shilajit's unique significance in traditional medicine.

CONCLUSION

Shilajit is a natural herbo-mineral exudate revered in indigenous medicine for its potent regenerative and therapeutic properties. Found in the high-altitude rock crevices of the Himalayas and Hindu Kush—spanning India, Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Tibet—it forms over centuries from the slow decomposition of plant matter.

This study explores Shilajit by focusing on three critical areas like Physical Qualities: It is a sticky, tar-like substance, typically blackish-brown, with a distinct camphor-like odor and high solubility in water. Purification (Shodhana): Essential for safety, traditional methods involve dissolving raw Shilajit in water or herbal decoctions like Triphala to remove rock debris, heavy metals, and toxins. Applications: Utilized as a Rasayana (rejuvenator), it treats diverse ailments including diabetes, fatigue, and cognitive disorders while enhancing physical endurance. While traditional outcomes are well-documented, applying modern scientific methodologies—such as molecular analysis and clinical trials, is vital to fully validate its mechanisms and ensure standardized safety for future research.

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