



Original Article

A Conceptual Recapture of *Shukra Dushti* and The Role of *Shukra Shodhana* in Its Management

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Abstract:

Shukra is considered the essence of all dhatus and a key determinant of fertility, vitality, psychological stability and progeny in Ayurveda. The concept of Shukra Dushti, i.e., vitiation of semen, explains how improper diet, lifestyle, stress, and aggravated doshas affect the quality, quantity and functional capacity of Shukra. Treating symptoms alone is insufficient; the purification and restoration of Shukra are equally important. Acharya Charaka, Sushruta and Vagbhata describe specific herbs and formulations capable of Shukra Shodhana (purifying), Shukra Vardhana (enhancing) and Shukra Sthapana (stabilizing) actions. Though some works explore male infertility or semen disorders, a comprehensive conceptual recapture of Shukra Dushti and the therapeutic significance of Shukra Shodhana is lacking. Thus, this review aims to compile, analyze and synthesize classical and contemporary information regarding the concept of Shukra Dushti and its Ayurvedic management through Shukra Shodhana dravyas. This narrative review is based on classical texts, Nighantus, research articles, Ayurvedic pharmacological literature and major electronic databases relevant to Shukra Dushti, Shukra Shodhana and male reproductive health. Ayurveda describes seven types of Shukra Dushti characterized by alterations in color, smell, consistency, quantity and functional capacity. Classical Ayurvedic literature mentions several drugs with Shukra Shodhana and Shukra Vardhana actions- such as Ashwagandha, Kapikacchu, Gokshura, Atibala, Shatavari, Kushta, Pippali, Vidari, Bala and Yashtimadhu- which improve seminal quality by alleviating doshas, rejuvenating dhatus, enhancing spermatogenesis, and supporting hormonal balance. Shukra Shodhana dravyas possess anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, Rasayana, Vrisya and cytoprotective activities that restore normal semen parameters, improve libido and support overall reproductive health. They help correct dosha imbalance, improve tissue nutrition and prevent pathological changes related to Shukra Dushti. Hence, Shukra Shodhana forms the foundation of Ayurvedic management of male infertility and semen abnormalities.

Keywords: *Shukra Dushti, Shukra Shodhana, Vrisya Dravyas, Male Infertility, Ayurveda.*

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Introduction:

Modern lifestyle changes, increased stress, pollution, addictions and erratic diet patterns have led to a rise in male reproductive disorders. *Shukra*- the seventh and most refined *dhatu*- is responsible for reproduction, vitality, psychological stability and Ojas formation. Any disturbance in its purity or functional capacity manifests as *Shukra Dushti*,^[14] affecting fertility and overall wellbeing. Breast milk is the prime nourishment for an infant, whereas *Shukra* is the prime determinant of progeny and continuation of lineage- hence both hold supreme importance in *Ayurveda*.^[15]

According to classical texts: *Shuddha Shukra* is described as *shuklam, madhuram, snigdam, picchilam*, possessing smoothness, unctuousness, clarity, and vitality. *Dushta Shukra* loses these qualities due to aggravated *Vata, Pitta, Kapha* or combinations thereof.^[1]

Acharyas explain that *Ahar-Vihara* (diet and lifestyle), psychological state, sleep quality, behavior and *dosha* imbalance have direct influence on the formation and quality of *Shukra*.^[2,3] Thus, treating only symptomatic manifestations- such as sexual weakness, infertility, or libido disorders- is insufficient. Purification and rejuvenation of *Shukra* is essential. *Ayurveda* offers a distinct group of herbs possessing *Shukra Shodhana* and *Shukra Vardhana* actions that improve seminal quality, enhance sperm count and motility, and support reproductive potential.^[16,18]

Aim:

To collect and comprehensively review information available regarding the concept of *Shukra Dushti* and the role of *Shukra Shodhana dravyas* in its management.

Methodology:

This review is in a narrative format and done from literature and publications relevant to *Shukra dusti* and *Shukra-shodhan Mahakashaya* and major computerized databases relevant to literature.

Observations And Results:

Shukra (Semen)- Terminology and Importance- *Shukra* is also referred to as *Retas, Beeja, Veerya* and *Garbha Karaka* in various Ayurvedic texts. It is considered the essence of all *dhatu*s, responsible for reproduction, vitality, strength, *Ojas* formation, and mental stability.^[1]

Formation of *Shukra* (*Shukra Utpatti*)- Various *Acharyas* describe the process of *Shukra* formation differently, but all agree that it is the final and most refined essence of the *dhatu* metabolism.^[2]

1. Opinion of *Acharya Sushruta*^[2]

- After digestion of food, the *rasa dhatu* is formed.
- Through *dhatu poshana* (step-by-step tissue nourishment), the essence of each *dhatu* nourishes the next.
- The most subtle essence of *majja dhatu* transforms into *Shukra dhatu*.
- *Shukra* is present throughout the body, and its principal seat is the testes, from where it becomes capable of ejaculation.

2. *Acharya Charaka*^[3] and *Acharya Bhela*^[8]

- They state that *ahara rasa* (nutritive essence of food) nourishes the mother and the fetus in women, and in men it nourishes all seven *dhatu*s up to *Shukra*.
- Food consumed performs three functions: *Sharira Pusti, Dhatu Pusti* and *Shukra Pusti*.
- This emphasizes the major role of diet and digestion in the formation of *Shukra*.

3. *Acharya Harita*^[11]

- Whatever food a person consumes is digested by *jatharagni*.



- The essence (*sara bhaga*) of food gets transformed through the *dhatu*s, ultimately producing *Shukra*.
- The quality and strength of *Shukra* depend on *agni*, *dhatu* strength and proper functioning of *Shukravaha srotas*.
- In individuals with weak *dhatu*s or weak *agni*, the quantity and quality of *Shukra* decrease, leading to conditions like oligospermia.

4. Acharya Vagbhata (*Ashtanga Sangraha & Hridaya*)^[1]

- He explains that *Shukra* is produced from the most refined essence of *ahara rasa*.
- Proper digestion and balanced *agni* ensure the production of healthy *Shukra*.
- If *Vata* obstructs the channels or *Pitta* vitiates the essence, *Shukra Dushti* occurs.

Table-01: Qualities of Shuddha Shukra as per Various Acharyas

Acharya	Description of Shuddha Shukra
Charaka ^[3]	White, sweet, heavy, unctuous, smooth, capable of producing strength and progeny
Sushruta ^[2]	Crystal white, smooth, sticky, resembling ghee kept in cold condition
Vagbhata ^[1]	Cold, white, sweet, dense, unctuous, resembling honey in texture
Bhavaprakasha ^[9]	Clear, thick, sweet smelling, resembling the mucus of a lotus stalk

Table-02: Shukra Sampat Qualities According to Various Acharyas

Samhita / Acharya	Guna	Rasa	Sparsha	Varna / Pariksha	Karya	Parinama
Charaka Samhita ^[4]	Snigdha, Drava, Mridu, Guru	Madhura	Shlakshn, Picchila	Shukla, clear, slightly thick	Provides Bala, Virya, Ojas; responsible for reproduction	Healthy formation of Garbha; supports vitality and mental stability
Sushruta Samhita ^[5]	Snigdha, Bahala, Mridu	Madhura	Slakshna, Picchila	Crystal white, resembling ghee kept in cold place	Increase of strength, stability, and reproductive capacity	Formation of healthy Garbha; supports Ojas
Ashtanga Sangraha / Hridaya ^[1] (Vagbhata)	Snigdha, Guru, Sheeta, Mridu	Madhura	Slakshna, Picchila	Clear white, dense, resembling honey in texture	Vrishya, Balya and Garbhakara	Enhances fertility, libido, and tissue nourishment
Bhavaprakasha Nighantu ^[9]	Snigdha, Sandra, Manda, Sheeta	Madhura	Slakshna, Guru	Thick, white, sweet smelling, like lotus-stalk mucus	Improves strength, fertility, and Ojas	Produces healthy, strong progeny
Harita Samhita ^[11]	Snigdha, Drava, Shuddha	Madhura	Soft, smooth	White, pure, non-viscous but stable	Garbhotpadaka (fertility), Jeevana, Bala	Leads to proper conception and vitality



Shukra Dushthi as per Various Acharyas:

Shukra becomes impure when any of its natural characteristics- such as color, smell, taste, touch, consistency or functional capacity- become abnormal. Impaired *Shukra* cannot support fertility, vitality or healthy formation of the embryo. Therefore, understanding the distinction between normal (*prakruta*) and vitiated (*dushtha*) *Shukra* is essential.^[6]

According to *Ayurvedic* texts, several factors can vitiate *Shukra*, including poor digestion, consumption of unsuitable or incompatible foods, excessive salty, sour, hot, fermented, or heavy-to-digest items, excessive sexual activity, suppression of natural urges, mental stress, sleeplessness, grief, anger, trauma, addictions and irregular lifestyle.^[7] These habits disturb the *doshas*, which then contaminate the *Shukra* circulating through the *Shukra-vaha srotas*. Various *Acharyas Charaka*^[3], *Sushruta*^[5], *Vagbhata*^[6], *Bhavaprakash*^[9] and *Yogarajnanak*^[10] all describe similar causative factors of *Shukra Dushthi* such as:

- Excessive physical strain
- Overindulgence in alcohol and incompatible foods
- Long-term illness
- Psychological stress
- Excessive heat exposure
- Suppression of natural urges
- Injury or trauma to reproductive organs
- Excessive coital activity
- Weak digestion and low dhatu strength

Types of *Shukra Dushthi*- Classical texts describe seven major types of *Shukra Dushthi*:^[3,5,6,9]

1. *Phenila*- frothy, airy, caused by vata vitiation
2. *Tanu*-very thin, watery, reduced density

3. *Ghanibhuta*- thick, clotted, associated with kapha
4. *Ruksha*- dry, lacking unctuousness
5. *Puti*- foul-smelling, associated with pitta or infection
6. *Raktabha*- reddish or blood-tinged
7. *Picchila*- excessively slimy and sticky

These altered forms correlate with various modern reproductive disorders such as:^[12]

- Oligospermia
- Asthenospermia
- Teratospermia
- Azoospermia
- Inflammatory or infective semen abnormalities
- Varicocele-related changes

Special Forms of Shukra Dushthi^[17]

Abhigataja Shukra Dushthi (Trauma-induced)- Trauma to the testes or reproductive tract can vitiate *Shukra*. *Vagbhata* explains that trauma produces symptoms similar to *vata*-vitiating *Shukra*, such as thin, frothy or scanty semen, pain in reproductive organs or reduced libido.

Graha-related Shukra Dushthi^[13] (Psychological/behavioral disturbances)- Classical literature describes that severe emotional disturbances or *graha*-related conditions (symbolic descriptions of psychological imbalance) can affect *Shukra* quality. These may produce:

- Increase in heat and bitterness
- Mixed dosha features
- Abnormal smell and color
- Reduced capacity to form healthy progeny

These descriptions symbolically correlate with conditions like psychosomatic infertility, stress-induced hormonal imbalance, and emotional disturbances affecting reproductive health.



Table-03: Types of *Shukra Dusti* According to Various *Acharyas*

<i>Acharya</i>	Types of <i>Shukra Dusti</i> Described	Brief Description
<i>Charaka</i> ^[3]	1. <i>Phenila</i> 2. <i>Tanu</i> 3. <i>Ruksha</i> 4. <i>Picchila</i> 5. <i>Avasadi</i> 6. <i>Guru</i>	- Frothy - Watery / Thin - Dry / Less unctuous - Sticky / Slimy - Settled / Sediment-like - Heavy
<i>Sushruta</i> ^[5]	1. <i>Phenila</i> 2. <i>Tanu</i> 3. <i>Ruksha</i> 4. <i>Picchila</i> 5. <i>Avasadi</i> 6. <i>Guru</i>	Identical to Charaka's description
<i>Vagbhata (Ashtanga Hridaya)</i> ^[6]	1. <i>Phenila</i> 2. <i>Tanu</i> 3. <i>Ruksha</i> 4. <i>Picchila</i> 5. <i>Avasadi</i> 6. <i>Guru</i>	Same six types, with similar pathological features
<i>Kashyapa</i> ^[8]	Describes abnormalities in terms of infertility causes related to <i>Shukra</i> quality	Not enumerated as six types; discusses functional defects
<i>Harita</i> ^[11]	Mentions alterations such as reduced quantity, color changes and consistency defects	Describes qualitative & quantitative abnormalities

Table-04: Details of Types of *Shukra Dusti* ^[4,5,6]

Type	Causes	Symptoms	Effects on Fertility
<i>Phenila</i>	<i>Vata</i> increase, strain, stress	Frothy, bubbly	Low potency, poor quality
<i>Tanu</i>	Weakness, deficiency, <i>Vata/Pitta</i>	Thin, watery	Low count & volume
<i>Ruksha</i>	Dry diet, dehydration, stress	Dry, non-unctuous	Low motility
<i>Picchila</i>	<i>Kapha</i> , obesity	Sticky, slimy	Trapped sperm, low movement
<i>Avasadi</i>	<i>Ama</i> , <i>Kapha</i> , poor digestion	Settles at bottom	Impure semen, low fertility
<i>Guru</i>	<i>Kapha</i> , heavy diet	Thick, heavy	Reduced motility

Shukra Dushthi Chikitsa- Management of *Shukra Dushthi* is described through: ^[6,17]

- Purification therapies such as *Vamana* and *Virechana* (as required according to *dosha*)
- *Vishesh Chikitsa* (specific *dosha*-based treatment)
- Use of *Shukra Shodhana* and *Shukra Vardhana* herbs
- Rasayana therapy for rejuvenation of *Shukra dhatu*

Acharya Charaka and other classical texts describe a group of herbs that help in *Shukra*

purification, *dosha* balancing, improving sperm quality and enhancing male reproductive strength. Below is the reconstructed *Shukra Shodhana Mahakashaya* (group of major *Shukra*-cleansing herbs) based on *Charaka*, *Susruta*,^[3] *Vagbhata*^[1] and *Nighantu* references where these drugs are consistently described as:

- *Shukra shodhaka* (purifying)
- *Shukra vardhaka* (enhancing)
- *Vrishya* (aphrodisiac)
- *Balya* and *rasayana* (rejuvenative)



Table-05: Shukra Shodhana Mahakashaya^[3] Dravya Detail

Sr. No.	Drug Name	Botanical Name	Part Used
1	Ashwagandha	Withania somnifera	Root
2	Kapikacchu	Mucuna pruriens	Seed
3	Gokshura	Tribulus terrestris	Fruit
4	Shatavari	Asparagus racemosus	Root
5	Vidari	Pueraria tuberosa	Tuber
6	Yashtimadhu	Glycyrrhiza glabra	Root
7	Bala	Sida cordifolia	Root / Whole plant
8	Atibala	Abutilon indicum	Root / Whole plant
9	Guduchi	Tinospora cordifolia	Stem
10	Shilajit (mineral drug)	Asphaltum punjabianum	Purified extract

Table-06: Shukra Shodhana Mahakashaya^[9] Properties

S.No	Drugs	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka	Dosha Karma
1	Ashwagandha	Madhur, Tikta	Guru, Snigdha	Usna	Madhur	Vata shamak, Kapha vardhak
2	Kapikacchu	Madhur, Tikta	Guru, Snigdha	Usna	Madhur	Vata shamak, Kapha vardhak
3	Gokshura	Madhur	Laghu, Snigdha	Sheet	Madhur	Vata-pitta shamak
4	Shatavari	Madhur, Tikta	Guru, Snigdha	Sheet	Madhur	Vata-pitta shamak
5	Vidari	Madhur	Guru, Mridu	Sheet	Madhur	Vata-pitta shamak
6	Yashtimadhu	Madhur	Laghu, Snigdha	Sheet	Madhur	Vata-pitta shamak
7	Bala	Madhur	Laghu, Snigdha	Sheet	Madhur	Vata shamak
8	Atibala	Madhur, Tikta	Laghu, Snigdha	Sheet	Madhur	Vata-pitta shamak
9	Guduchi	Tikta, Kashaya	Laghu, Snigdha	Usna	Madhur	Tridosha shamak
10	Shilajit	Kashaya, Tikta	Laghu, Tikshna	Usna	Madhur	Vata-kapha shamak

Discussion:

A review of the herbs included in *Shukra-shodhana Mahakashaya* shows that most of these drugs possess *Madhura, Tikta* and *Kashaya rasa*, *Guru, Laghu, Snigdha guna*, *Sheeta* or *Ushna virya*

and actions that support *Vata-pitta shamana*, *Rakta-shodhana* and *Shukra-dhatu* poshana.

These herbs help in:

- Removing accumulated doshas from the *Shukravaha srotas*



- Improving the quality, clarity and potency of *Shukra*
- Enhancing proper formation of *Shukra dhatu* and its *Upadhatus*
- Supporting the reproductive system, vitality and overall fertility
- Correcting conditions such as *Kshina shukra*, *Tanu shukra*, *Ruksha shukra*, *Granthi shukra* and other types of *Shukra Dusti*

Because of their *Srotoshodhaka*, *Rasayana*, *Vrishya* and *Balya* effects, these herbs promote the formation of healthy *Shukra*, which is essential for proper reproductive function, strength, longevity and vitality.

Conclusion:

This study highlights that *Shukra dhatu* plays a central role in reproductive health, vitality and overall well-being. Imbalance or vitiation of *Shukra (Shukra Dusti)* may lead to conditions like infertility, low libido, poor semen quality, and reproductive system disorders.

Ayurveda describes several methods for improving *Shukra* quantity and quality. Among them, *Shukra-shodhana Mahakashaya* is especially important because its herbs possess purifying, nourishing and rejuvenating properties. These herbs not only help in correcting *Shukra Dusti*, but also maintain balance of the *doshas*, improve *Rasadhatu* and *Raktadhatu* and ultimately support the complete *dhatu* formation process.

Overall, *Shukra-shodhana Mahakashaya* is highly effective in enhancing reproductive health, improving *Shukra* quality and strengthening the *Shukravaha srotas*, thereby contributing to overall vitality and well-being.

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