

Shukra Dhatu: A Closer View From Ayurveda Treatise



Medical Science

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SHUKRAKSHAYA:

Shukra kshaya comprises of two words i.e Shukra and Kshaya. Kshaya means less. The term "shukra" is derived from the root word "suk- soce", "suka kleda" which means "purity". Shukra means semen, seed and seminal fluid (M.W.Dictionary). Thus the combined meaning of word Shukra kshaya is diminution of semen. In the present context the Shukra kshaya has been used to describe qualitative and quantitative diminution of components of Seminal fluid with particular reference to sperms. Hence Shukra kshaya stands for oligospermia in this context.

The other technical meanings of Shukra are bright, fire, the plant venus, semen, sperm, preceptor of Daityas (Shukra-carya), a morbid affliction of the eyes etc. (M.W. Dictionary)¹⁻⁵

SYNONYMS OF SHUKRA: 6

1. Majja Samudbhava: Produced from Majja during the evolutionary metamorphosis of Dhatus. 2. Bijam: One which has the capacity to induce new growth / generation. 3. Shukra: Which is ejaculated at the time of coitus? 4. Ananda Samudbhava: That, which is ejaculated at the time of orgasm. 5. Rupa Dravya: That which imparts structure to the Atma.⁷ 6. Pumstva: The fertility factor. 7. Paurusam: Inherent character of Purusa. 8. Virya: By virtue of which action is manifested. 9. Tejas: That which is shining, bright.

DEFINITION OF SHUKRA:

Shukra is a substance which is responsible for body activities especially regeneration, reproduction metabolism and tends to impart vigor and energy, and part of which comes out of the body in male at the height of sexual act and performs the specific function of reproduction.⁸

GUNA OF SHUKRA:

Spatikabha, (crystal like), Shukla, Snigdha, Madhura, Madhugandhi, Taila and Kshaudravat, Guru, Bahu (abundant), Bahala (thick), Picchila (viscous), Anupravana Bhava (atomicity and tendency to move), Soumya (ap pradhana), Sara (moving tendency), Drava (fluid), Avisram (not foul smelling) Avidahi (soothing) and Phalavat (fertilizing and pleasurable). All these are the Biophysical and Physico chemical properties of Shukra which clearly resembles the physical properties of the seminal fluid.⁹

ORIGIN OF SHUKRA:

Mahabhautika origin: Shukra is derived from Soma and hence is described as Saumya.¹⁰ Also it has predominance of Jala Mahabhuta among the four Mahabhutas exclusive of Akasa.¹¹ It is Jala Guna Pradhana and drugs with Madhura, Snigdha properties bring about an increase in Shukra¹² suggesting the Kaphavargatva of the same.

PRODUCTION OF SHUKRA:

The production of Shukra can be understood under the terms Janaka and Pravartaka. Thus, the stages of Sukrot-patti can be summarised as follows:¹³

Janana:

Stage - A1 - Production of Shukra Dhatu
Stage - A2 - Transformation of Shukra into Rupadravya.
Pravarthana - Stage B - Expulsion of Rupadravya

SHUKRADHARA KALA:

The circulation of shukra in the entire body is like that antah shukra (androgenic hormones) where as the secretion of testis and accessory sex glands which form the main constituents of semen are known as bahya shukra. Hence the secreting membrane of these organs may be unanimously considered as Shukradharakala.¹⁴

PHYSIOLOGY:

The performance of sexual act depends upon physical and psychological excitement, which is proportional to the strength of body and mind.¹⁵

Dealing with the sexual aberrations, Acharya shushruta says that by taking recourse to unusual and deviant measures of their choice the shukravaha siras of these subjects swell up and dialate due to excitement, pleasure and stimulation, resulting in the erection of penis. In a different context, he says that ejaculation of shukra occurs when the mind is happy and pleasurable, and the body is engaged in sexually stimulating congress with desirable woman.

The two indriyas that maintain proximate relationship with the physiology of erection are the mind and penile organ itself. Shushruta opines that the intermediary or vehicle that establishes connection between the mind and the sense organ is the principle of vata.¹⁶ Since the experience of climatic sexual joy is essentially tactile, the role of sparsha and twak cannot and should not be overlooked. Infact, sparshanendriya is the gateway for all sensory perception.¹⁷

It will be surprised to know that Acharya Sushruta was the first person who described the complex psycho-neuro vascular mechanism of erection. The beauty of this description is that it is totally compatible with the basic mechanics of erection as recognized by modern day physiologist.¹⁸

PHYSIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF SHUKRA FUNCTIONS OF SHUKRA -

Besides the prime function of reproduction, Shukra possesses other functions too, which can be grouped as under -

- (1) **Sarvadaihika i.e.**, systemic function
- (2) **Maithunagata i.e.**, related with sexual act
- (3) **Rupadravyagata i.e.**, functions related to seminal fluid

(1) **Sarvadaihika:** The Shukradhara Kala is said to pervade the whole body and hence, the Shukra is spread throughout the body just as ghee in milk and jaggery in sugarcane juice.

This Shukra performs certain functions like-

Dhairyam: Dalhana describes it as the capacity to fight against any condition¹⁹ and is related to the physical and mental alertness (Apte, 1984).

Dehabalam: Dalhana opines that Dehabalam includes both Deha Upacaya i.e., physical fitness (physique) as well as Utsaha i.e., enthusiasm.²⁰ Caraka has ascribed Sarira Upacaya and Bala (both Sarira and Manas) to the optimum level of Dhatus.²¹

Ojoposaka: The Ojas - essence of all Dhatus gets nourished by the Shukra Dhatu.²² Thus, the functions of Ojas can be said to be maintained by Sarvadaihika Shukra.²³

(2) **Maithunagata:** The function of Shukra pertaining to the sexual act is not par independent to the Sarvadaihika Shukra and these are -

Priti: The love towards opposite sex, a sexual instinct or the desire to co-habit with the opposite sex is an attribute of Shukra. Dalhana also opines that this Priti is indirectly induced by Ojas under the control of Shukra Dhatu.²⁴

Cyavanam: The word meaning is "to secrete" or "come out" also has been described by Dalhana as timely ejaculation which suggests Maithunagata function of Shukra.

Harsa: Deriving curiosity and pleasure about repeated sexual acts has been mentioned as a function of Shukra Dhatu. Chakrapani has opined that the development of sexual thoughts and maintenance of erectile state of penis (Dhvaja Harsa) are special functions of Shukra. Thus, the complex sexual behaviour including erection, ejaculation and orgasm are due to Shukra through its Maithunagata functions.²⁵

(3) **Rupadravyagata:** The function of Reto Dhatu pertaining to Rupadravya renders fulfillment of one of the Purusarthas of life. Bija, a synonym of Shukra can be considered a subtle part of Rupadravya and the function Bijartham can be attributed to the same Garbhotpadana, the prime function of Shukra can be considered the Rupadravyagata Karma.²⁶

The above said systemic and sexual act related functions of Sarvadaihika Shukra can be correlated to the function of androgens especially testosterone. The Rupadravyagata function can be correlated to semen in general and the spermatozoa in specific.

UTPATTI OF SHUKRA DHATU

(1)**Production of Shukra from Ahara Rasa:** The Rasadi Sapta Dhatus are the outcome of successive evolutions, the previous Dhatu being transformed into the latter. The Ahara Rasa or the Anna Rasa forms the substrate for this progressive evolution. Thus, Rasa Dhatu is formed foremost, then Rakta Dhatu, and so on, upto the transformation of Majja into Shukra Dhatu.²⁷

(2)**Production of Shukra from Majja Dhatu:** From the point of view of Ayurvediya Kriya Sarira, a Shukra stand last among the Sapta Dhatus and is the outcome of evolutive metamorphosis of Majja Dhatu, the 6th and preceding Dhatu. This metamorphosis is brought about by the action of Shukra Dhatvagni on the essence of Majja. The Vayu and Akasa produce pores, very subtle in the Asthi Dhatu from which the Shukra oozes out just like water from a new earthen pitcher. This Shukra pervades the whole body, integrity of which is maintained by the Shukradhara kala.

Among the three hypothesis laid for Dhatu formation, the Ksiradadhi Nyaya explains the initial Dhatu formation as such and the rest two viz., Kedarakulya and Khalekapota Nyaya explain the nourishment of Dhatus.²⁸

(3)**Quantity of Shukra:** Caraka has mentioned the quantity of Shukra to be 1/2 Anjali whereas Bhela mentioned it as 1 Anjali.²⁹

(4)**Upadhatu of Shukra:** Though Acaryas like Caraka, Susruta and Vagbhata haven't mentioned any Upadhatu for Shukra, Sargadhara considers Ojas as -Upadhatu of Shukra.³⁰

(5)**Shukra Mala:** Acaryas Caraka and Susruta have considered Shukra to be the purest form of substance and hence devoid of any Mala just like Svarna. However, some authors and commentators felt the necessity to describe mala of Shukra and hence have named Ojas, Smasru Vaktra Snigdghata (sebum on the face), Pidika (acne) as the Mala of Shukra.³¹

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