



**MORPHOLOGICAL, CONTROVERSIAL AND LITERARY REVIEW OF SHANKHPUSHPI**

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**ABSTRACT**

India is enriched in diversity of flora since ages. The ancient professionals have kept records of their work related to the plants and their works are a source of research today. *Shankhpushpi* is a well known herb since the most primitive works on Ayurveda have its therapeutic uses well elaborated and its morphological features well described. Later on, controversies erupt as locals in different parts of India used different plant species in the name of *Shankhpushpi*. Mainly four different plant species are considered in the name *Shankhpushpi* across India. These are *Convolvulus pluricaulis*, *Clitorea ternatea*, *Evolvulus alsenoides* and *Canscora decussata*. *Shankhpushpi* is a widely used herbal drug in the management of cognitive disorders from the times of *Acharya Charak* (200 BC) till today. *Shankhpushpi* has been categorized as a 'Medhya' drug i.e. an efficient brain tonic by all ancient texts with no exceptions. Modern researches have established *Shankhpushpi* as an effective drug to be used either single or in combination, in the treatment of central nervous system disorders and boosting intellect. This article is an attempt to review the morphological features of the plant taken as *Shankhpushpi* along with the review of literature regarding the therapeutic values described from 200 BC to 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**KEYWORDS:** *Shankhpushpi*, *Convolvulus pluricaulis*, *Clitorea ternatea*, *Evolvulus alsenoides*, *Canscora decussata*.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Latin Name** – *Convolvulus pluricaulis* Chois. (**Synonym** - *Convolvulus microphyllus* Sieb., *Convolvulus prostrates* Forsk)

**Family**- Convolvulaceae

**Establishment of the correct plant**

Five different plant species i.e. *Convolvulus pluricaulis*, *Evolvulus alsenoides*, *Clitorea ternatea*, *Lavendula bipinnata* and *Canscora decussata* were to be taken in the name of *Shankhpushpi* by Ayurveda practitioners in different parts of the country<sup>1</sup>. Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India has established that *Convolvulus pluricaulis* is the plant species which should be taken in the name of *Shankhpushpi* and put an end to the controversial status of the plant. API described this plant as '*Sankhapuspi*' consists of whole plant of *Convolvulus pluricaulis* Choisy; a prostrate, sub-erect, spreading, hairy, perennial herb with a woody root stock, found throughout the country<sup>2</sup>.

**Properties of *Convolvulus pluricaulis* in Ayurveda Texts<sup>3</sup>**

*Rasa*- Tikta

*Guna*- Snigdha, Pichhila

*Veerya*- Sheet

*Vipaka*- Madhur

*Prabhav*- Medhya

**Synonyms<sup>4</sup>**

*Sanskrit* - *Sankhapuspa*, *Sankhahva*

*Bengali* - *Sankhapuspi*

*Gujarati* - *Sankhavali*

*Hindi* - *Shankhapushpi*

*Kannad* - *Bilikantisoppu*, *Shankhapushpi*, *Shankhali*

*Marathi* - *Sankhahuli*, *Sankhavela*, *Sankhapuspi*

*Oriya* - *Sankhapuspi*

*Punjabi* - *Ksirapuspi*, *Kakkanangudi*, *Sankhahuli*

*Tamil* - *Kakattam*, *Kakkanangudi*, *Karakhuratt*, *Sanghupushpam*

*Telugu* - *Shankhapushpi*

**Literal Meaning<sup>5</sup>** - The flowers (*Pushpa*) of this plant resembles with the shape of conch (*Shankh*).

**Taxonomical Classification of *Shankhpushpi*<sup>6</sup>**

**Kingdom** - Plantae

**Sub-kingdom** - Tracheobionta

**Super-division** - Spermatophyta

**Division** - Magnoliophyta

**Class** - Magnoliopsida

**Sub-class** - Asteridae

**Order** - Solanales

**Family** - Convolvulaceae

**Genus** - *Convolvulus*

**Species** - *pluricaulis*

**Morphological features of *Convolvulus pluricaulis*<sup>7</sup>**

**Root** - Usually branched, cylindrical, ribbed having some rough stem nodules and small secondary roots, 1-5 cm long, 0.1 - 0.4 cm thick, yellowish brown to light brown.

**Stem** - Slender, cylindrical, about 0.1 cm or less in thickness with clear hairy nodes and internodes; light green.

**Leaf** - Shortly petiolate, linear-lanceolate, acute, hairy on both surfaces; 0.5-2 cm long and 0.1-0.5 cm broad; light green.

**Flower** - White or pinkish; solitary or in pairs sessile or sub-sessile in the leaf axis; sepals narrowly, linear-lanceolate, sparsely hairy; corolla shortly discoid; stamen 5, free, epipetalous, alternate with the petals, inserted deep in the corolla tube; ovary superior and bicarpellary.

**Fruit** - Capsule, oblong globose with coriaceous, pale brown pericarp.

**Seed** - Brown; minutely puberulous.

**Geographical Distribution** - *Covulvulus pluricaulis* is known from the margins and within the Sahara and Sind desert, a distribution that 'Saad' called "Sahara Sindian"<sup>8</sup>. It is found all over in rainy season<sup>9</sup>. Distributed in Gujarat, Konkan, Sindh, Bihar etc.<sup>10</sup>

#### Important Formulations<sup>11</sup>

*Brahmi ghrī, Agastyaharītaki, Rasayana, Brahma Rasayana, Manasmitra Vataka, Gorocanadivati, Brahmivati.*

**Therapeutic Uses<sup>11</sup>** - *Manasaroga, Apasmara*

**Dose<sup>11</sup>** - 3-8 g of the drug in powder form.

#### Shankpushpi in Ayurveda Literature<sup>12</sup>

- It is quoted to be *Soubhagyakarana* and *Vasikarana* in the Vedic literature. *Nyastika, Subhangakarani, Sahasraparni, Samvanani, Samuspala, Babhru, Kalyani* etc. are the synonyms used for it. The 'Medhya' property of *Shankpushpi* is also delineated in ancient texts.
- Acharya Charak* described it one of the best 'Medhya' drug in *Medhya Rasayana*.
- Brihtrayi* has quoted *Shankpushpi* limited number of times and they did not include it in any *Gana* or *Varga*.
- Dhanvantari Nighantu* mentioned one variety of *Shankpushpi* only.
- Sodhala* described red (*Raktapuspika*) and blue flowered (*Nilapushpa*) varieties.
- Kaiyadev Nighantu* described two varieties; *Shankpushpi* and *Sarpakshi*.
- Bhavamishra* quoted two varieties; while (*Shvet*) and blue (*Nilā*) varieties.

**Table 1: Description in Charak Samhita<sup>13</sup>**

S. No.	Reference	Formulation	Indication
1.	Ch. Chi. 1(i)/48	Pratham Brahmaraśayana	Rasayana
2.	Ch. Chi. 1(i)/58	Dwitiya Brahmaraśayana	Rasayana
3.	Ch. Chi. 1(iii)/24	Indra Rasayana	Rasayana
4.	Ch. Chi. (iii)/30-31	Medhya Rasayana	Rasayana
5.	Ch. Chi. 10/25	Brahmi Ghrī	Apsamara
6.	Ch. Chi. 10/62	Brahmi Ghrī + Shankpushpi	Apsamara
7.	Ch. Chi. 18/57	Agstya Haritaki	Kaas Chikitsa

#### Description in Sushruta Samhita<sup>14</sup>

**Table 2: Sushruta has described Sankpushpi in Tikta-Varga Dravyas in Su. Su.42/22**

S. No.	Reference	Formulation	Indication
1.	Su. Sha. 10/72	Brahmiadi Yog	Bal-budhhi Vardhak
2.	Su. Chi. 30/24	Rasayana	Rasayana
3.	Su. U. 52/43	Agstya Avaleh	KaasChikitsa

**Table 3: Description in Astang Hridaya<sup>15</sup>**

S. No.	Reference	Formulation	Indication
1.	A.H. Chi. 3/127	Agstya Haritaki	Kaas Chikitsa
2.	A.H. U. 1/9	Talvagunthan Vidhi	Balopcharniya
3.	A.H. U. 1/43	Astang Ghrī	Medhya
4.	A.H. U. 6/24	Brahmi Ghrī	Unmad Chikitsa
5.	A.H. U. 7/24	Brahmi Ghrī	Apsamar Chikitsa
6.	A.H. U. 39/18	Brahma Rasayana	Rasayana
7.	A.H. U. 39/44-45	MedhaVridhikar Rasayana	Rasayana
8.	A.H. U. 39/50	Brahmiadi Rasayana Yog	Rasayana

**Table 4: Description in Sharangdhara Samhita<sup>16</sup>**

S. No.	References	Formulations	Indications
1.	Sha. M. Kh. 1/18	Brahmiadi Swarasa	Unmaad Rog
2.	Sha. M. Kh. 8/32	Agstyaharitkyavaleh	Kaas Chikitsa
3.	Sha. M. Kh. 9/61	Bindughritam	Jalodar

## Description of Shankpushpi in Nighantu

### Dhanvantari Nighantu

It described *Shankpushpi* in *Karviradi Varga*. *Kambupushpi*, *Kambumalini*, *Shankkusuma*, *Shankhini* are the synonyms given to the plant. It described *Shankpushpi* as a *Medhya* and *Rasayana* drug. It used in *Vishachikitsa*, *Apasmar Chikitsa* and *Bhoot chikitsa*. It is said to be *Katu*, *Tikta* and *Ushna*.<sup>17</sup>

### Kaiyadev Nighantu

*Shankpushpi*, *Kshirapushpi*, *Kambupushpi*, *Manorama*, *Shivbrahmi*, *Bhootilata*, *Kiriti*, *Kambumalika*, *Mangalayapushpi*, *Sjankhavaha*, *Raktapushpa*, *Subhadra*, *Sukshmapatrika*, *Sarpakshi*, *Vishnukranta*, *Neelpushpika* are the synonyms given to the plant. *Shankpushpi* is said to be *Medhya* and *Rasayana*. It is to be used in *Apasmar*, *Kushtha*, *Bhoot*, *Visha* and *Krimi-chikitsa*.<sup>18</sup>

### Shodhal Nighantu

It described *Shankpushpi* in *Karviradi Varga*. There is incomplete description of *Shankpushpi* in it. Only synonyms given are *Sukshmapatra*, *Sarpakshi* and *Raktapushpika*.<sup>19</sup>

### Madanpal Nighantu

It described *Shankpushpi* in *Abhyadi Varga*. *Kiriti*, *Kambumalini*, *Shankhahuli*, *Shankhnagni* are the synonyms described in it. *Shankpushpi* is used as *Medhya*, *Rasayana*, Intellect promoter and as cognitive drug.<sup>20</sup>

### Bhavprakash Nighantu

It described *Shankpushpi* in *Guruchyadi Varga*. *Shankhavaha*, *Manglayakusuma* are the synonyms given to the plant. It described *Shankpushpi* to be used as *Medhya*, *Vrishya*, *Manasroghrit*, *Rasayana*, and as a cognitive drug. It is also to be used in *Kushtha*, *Krimi* and *Vishachikitsa*. *Shankpushpi* is said to be *Kasaya* and *Ushna*.<sup>21</sup>

### Raj Nighantu

It described *Shankpushpi* in *Guruchyadi Varga*. *Supushpi*, *Shankhavaha*, *Kambumalini*, *Sitapushpi*, *Kambupushpi*, *Shankhkusuma*, *Chirinti* and *Shankhmalini* are the synonyms given to this plant. The drug is said to be intellect promoting and helps to improve voice quality.<sup>22</sup>

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### Cite this article as:

Kumar Naveen, Chaubey Suresh, Singh Sanjay Kumar, Tewari Ramesh Chandra. Morphological, Controversial and Literary Review of Shankpushpi. International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research. 2016;4(10):41-43.

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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