



Understanding the Concept of *Stanya* and its Need in Context to Breastfeeding

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ABSTRACT:

One of the most fundamental requirements of human life is food. The nutritional requirements vary from childhood through age. Infant mortality is greater in developing countries, such as India, due to a lack of sufficient nourishment for children. As a result, it is critical to provide sufficient nourishment to children. Milk is the most important food for children since it not only gives them energy but also helps them grow and develop properly throughout this time. Even during the Vedic Period, breast milk was thought to be a great meal for newborns. The *Rigveda* recommends breastfeeding after delivery while reciting *Mantras*. Under the topic of *jatakarma*, several ayurvedic literatures demonstrate the importance of breastfeeding. One of the *updhatu* of *rasa* is *stanya*, or breast milk, according to Ayurvedic literature. Breast milk has several health benefits for both the mother and the child. Breastfeeding should begin as soon as the baby is born. Breastfeeding is the most effective approach to care for a newborn. Breast milk is the ideal diet for them, in addition to the overpowering attachment it fosters. The present review focused on the concept of *stanya* or breast milk mentioned in Ayurvedic literatures and its need in the present era.

Keywords: *Stanya*, breastfeed, *updhatu*, *Ayurveda*.

INTRODUCTION

Breast milk is an excellent source of nutrition for infants. Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first six months of life, after which "infants should receive nutritionally appropriate and safe supplemental meals while nursing continues for up to two years of age or beyond," according to the World Health Organization¹. Breastfeeding exclusively during the first six months of life

is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Furthermore, "breastfeeding should be continued for at least the first year of life, and thereafter for as long as the mother and child both wish."²

Exclusive breastfeeding is suggested for the first six months (26 weeks) of your baby's life, according to the National Health Service. After that, supplementing your baby's diet with breast milk will help them grow and



develop. Breastfeeding has a favorable impact on any amount. The longer you breastfeed, the bigger the advantages and the longer the protection lasts.

In our clinical practice, decreased breast milk production is a typical condition that we see in roughly 40% of patients. Women are subjected to stress and strain as a result of their assimilation into Western society. Lactation is a physiological process that is linked to a person's psychological state and lifestyle. *Stanyaksaya* (decreased breast milk) is caused by the mother's psychological status (*Krodha, shoka, Bhaya, Irsha, and Avatsalyatwa*), her diet, and her physiological condition, according to *Sushruta*³. The notion of insufficient milk supply is the most prevalent cause for early breastfeeding discontinuation. Lactation failure is caused by today's hectic lifestyle, stress, strained day-to-day activities, and poor and unhealthy eating habits. *Ayurveda's* ideas of *aahara* (diet), *vihara* (activities), and *aushada* (health) provide natural, holistic help in such situations (medications). So the present review focused on the Ayurvedic concept of *stanya* and its importance in the present era.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This topic is examined using a variety of Ayurvedic classic literatures. Materials on *stanya*, its importance, and other relevant topics were gathered, examined, and debated to get a comprehensive grasp of the concept of *stanya* in connection to breastfeeding.

Stanya

Breast milk or *Stanya* is the finest meal for newborns. According to *Charaka*, it is anabolic (*Brahmana*), wholesome (*satmya*), and unctuous, and it promotes energy (*Snigdha*). It can also be used as an instillation for *rakta, pitta*, and eye diseases⁴.

Sushruta has discussed the physical features of breast milk in addition to physiological qualities.

Breast milk is sweet, yet it has an astringent *anurasa* (secondary taste) and is cool, energizing, *laghu* (light), and an appetizer. In addition, he specifies that breast milk should never be cooked.

According to *Vagbhata* and other academicians, breastfeeding allows children to grow healthily.

Paryaya: Dugdha, Kshira, Payas, Stanya, Balajivana⁵

Stanya pramana (Quantity of stanya or breast milk):Amount of *stanya* is two *anjali*⁶

Formation of *Stanya*

As per *sushruta*, the *rasa* is created after food has been digested. The sweet essence of this *rasa*, which is circulating throughout the body due to the action of *vyana vata*, reaches the breast and is known as *stanya*. *Rasa* and *stanya* are both derived from *rasadhatu's* essence.^{7,8,9}

According to the notion of *garbhaposhana*^{10,11}, the *Aahara* ingested by *garbini* fulfills three roles. They are as follows:

- *Matru pusti*
- *Garbha pusti* and
- *Stana Pusti*.

Rasadhatu nurtures *stanya* as per Ayurvedic literatures^{12,13}. *Stanya* is considered an *updhatu* of *rasa dhatu* by *Acharya Sarangadhar*¹⁴. According to *Harita*¹⁵, whatever the women consume, it travels via the *kshiravahi sira* and gets combined with *pitta* before reaching *Jathara*. It is digested by the *agni*, reaches the *siras* of the breast, and then is expelled. Milk is a secretion that contains the *agni* and *soma* together. The blood becomes suppurated and white as a result of *pitta's* activity. Milk does not form in young girls due to a lack of *dhatu* strength, and in *vandhya*(Infertile) women due to *vayu* filling up a milk-carrying channel.

When discussing *garbhaposhana*, *Acharya Vriddha Vagbhata* claimed that *stanya* is produced from the *Aahara rasa* itself. Both *raja* and *stanya* are formed from the essence of *rasa*, with *stanya* being the *upadhatu* of *rasadhatu*¹⁶.

Among the ten *pranayatanas*(seat of life). *Bhela* has included *stanya*¹⁷.

Causes of *Stanya Pravriti*

Sushruta used the example of *Sukra* to help people comprehend the lactation process. *Sukra* remains spread throughout the body in a normal condition, but when she remembers something, touches her body parts, or engages in sexual activity, it collects in *Sukrasaya* and ejaculates from the penis. Milk secretes in the same way that *Sukra* does when the mother is stimulated by the elements listed below¹⁸.

1. The child's caressing of her body.
2. Observing the child
3. The child's remembrance
4. Keeping the child in her lap at all times.
5. The child's touching of her breast.

The most important component is the mother's love for her child.

The mother's affection for her infant is a significant impact on the production and ejaculation of breast milk. Many

psychogenic variables can suppress milk ejection by inhibiting oxytocin production. Worry, tension, pain, and doubt are inhibiting factors for the Oxytocin "Milk ejection" reflex, while loving thoughts of the baby, hearing the baby, seeing the baby, and the mother being relaxed/comfortable/assured are enhancing variables.

Breastfeeding

It is now well understood that breast milk is the ideal milk for both rich and poor babies, that colostrum is essential for the newborn, that complimentary food must be added after 6 months of age.

Breastfeeding should be continued for 2 years or beyond and the proper nutrition of lactating mothers should be ensured. Anxiety associated with the unfounded fear of lactation failure (the inability to produce milk) and of milk insufficiency (the inadequacy of breast milk for meeting the nutritional needs of the normal infant) is the most common reason for mothers failing to breastfeed within 1 hour of birth, maintenance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months, interrupting breastfeeding prematurely, or beginning complementary feeding before it is nutritionally required.¹⁹

The mother wrongly perceives that she is not getting enough milk and it is the most common reason for non-exclusive breastfeeding.

Ideal infant feeding comprises exclusive breastfeeding for six months followed by sequential addition of semi-solid and solid food.²⁰

Appropriate feeding is critical for an infant's healthy growth and development.

DISCUSSION

Breastfeeding is the practice of giving breast milk to a baby or young kid directly from a woman's breasts (through lactation) rather than from a bottle or other container. Sucking and swallowing milk is possible for babies because they have a sucking reflex. Without the use of infant formula or solid food, most moms can breastfeed for six months or more. The healthiest form of milk for human newborns is human breast milk. There are a few exceptions, such as if the mother is taking specific medications, is infected with HIV, or has active untreated tuberculosis. Breastfeeding promotes health, helps to prevent disease, and reduces health care and feeding costs.²¹

In both developing and developed countries, artificial

feeding is linked to an increase in baby diarrhoea deaths. Experts agree that breastfeeding is beneficial, but may disagree about the length of breastfeeding that is most beneficial, and about the risks of using artificial formulas.²² Breastfeeding is a very personal decision. Many women have their own beliefs and feelings about whether or not they want to.²³ "The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Dietetic Association promote breastfeeding as the BEST source of infant nutrition"²⁴

Breastfeeding is important for both mothers and infants, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Both recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and then supplemented breastfeeding for at least one year and up to two years or more.^{25,26} While acknowledging the benefits of breastfeeding, regulatory agencies are also working to reduce the hazards of artificial feeding.

Advantages of breastfeeding: The infant should be fed as far as possible on mother's milk because it is closer in its substance to the nutriment which the infant receives while in the womb, i.e. the menstrual blood that is transformed into milk. The infant readily accepts this milk and is quite used to it.²⁷

Importance of *stanya*

Infant feeding- food is one of the basic needs of human life. The nutritional problem of childhood differs from those of adults. All nutrients must provide not only energy and replacement of tissue but also for growth involving an increase in the size of all tissue in the body. Growth has its highest rate of increase in infancy. Thus nutritional problems are most liable to occur during this period. It is very essential to take proper care of the child for nutrition.

Ancient literature of *Ayurveda* has classified the childhood period based on their food requirement i.e. *ksirapa* (milk is the main diet) upto one year, *ksirannada* (milk and cereals both) from 1~2 year, and *Annada* (cereal as the main diet) two years onwards.²⁸

Milk is the primary diet of children. Breastfeeding was considered a very excellent food for infants, even in vedic period. *Rigveda* has advocated breastfeeding after birth with the recitation of mantras.

Skanda, mentioned in *dharma granthas* became popular as "*Kartikeya*" only because of being breastfed by six "*krittikas*". This reference reflects the importance of breast

milk.

1. *Charaka* considered milk a wholesome diet, as it provides full nutrition, increases strength, and keep one healthy.²⁹
2. *Sushruta* said that milk is the very first natural diet of all animals including human beings.

In the general state of the body, milk provides strength. It is aphrodisiac and also increases immunity, while in the disease stage it is congenial and also helpful in keeping *dosas* in a balanced state.³⁰

Kashyapa has expressed a similar view like *Charaka* & *Sushruta*.³¹

Harita has explained the role of milk in keeping a person free from various ailments and mentioned that milk purifies *srotas*, keeps *dosas* in a balanced state increases appetite, and improves digestion.

CONCLUSION

Ayurvedic depicted a detailed and scientific description of *stanya* and its importance which may be applied in the recent era for the reduction of infant mortality. In *Ayurveda* there is a description of a large number of the drugs, diet, and behavior regimens which are ascribed to be *stanyajanana* or breast milk promoter.

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