

Stanyapana (Breastfeeding) – a boon for children

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Abstract— Breast feeding is a pivotal part of child care which needs enormous importance. In Ayurveda, the procedure of breast feeding is described as a samskara of child which should be started with enchanting of mantras. 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 updhātu 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. Understanding the Ayurvedic perspective on stanya provides valuable insights into the importance of breast feeding and highlights the holistic approach of Ayurveda towards the well-being of both mother and child. Further research and exploration in this area may contribute to enhancing lactation practices and optimizing the health of both mother and child. This article helps us to explain how we understand the Ayurvedic perspective of stanya and practices of breastfeeding.

Index Terms- Ayurveda, Samskara, Mantras, Vedic, Jatakarma, Updhātu, Stanya, Rasa.

I. INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is the ideal form of infant feeding and is crucial for lifelong health and well-being. It provides unique nutritional, immunological, psychological and child spacing benefits. Although breastfeeding is natural and physiological, the current infant feeding practices are far from optimum because of lack of updated knowledge and training among medical and paramedical personnel, misconceptions in the community, misinformation by infant food manufacturers by lack of community and family support.

Breastfeeding is the nature's wonderful creation to protect the new-born all around soon after the birth in

terms of love, affection, nutrition etc. According to the universal epidemiology on breastfeeding, it prevents 8,23,000 annual deaths in children younger than 5 year and 20000 annual deaths of mother from breast carcinoma.¹ 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 wishes.²

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This topic is examined using a variety of Ayurvedic classic literatures.

Stanya-

Stanya is the first meal of the baby. Stanya is Updhātu of Ras dhātu which has vital role in specific fraction of life span –infancy. 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 Acharya 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 diseases³. According to Acharya Vagabhata, breastfeeding allows children to grow healthy.

Amount of stanya is two Anjali. ⁴ As per Acharya 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 rasadhātu's essence.⁵ According to the notion of garbhaphosana,

the Aahara ingested by garbhini fulfills three roles, Matra Pushti, Garbha Pushti and Stana Pushti.

Acharya Kasyapa also described the taste and colour of *stanya* influencing on the child as follows-

QUALITY OF <i>STANYA</i>	EFFECT ON CHILD
<i>Madhura</i> (sweet) <i>rasa</i>	Child passes excessive stools & urine
<i>Kasaya</i> (Astringent) <i>rasa</i>	Stoppage of stools and urine
If the color resembles with oil	Child becomes energetic
If the color resembles with <i>ghee</i>	Child becomes rich in finance
If the color resembles with smoke	Child achieves fame
<i>Suddha</i> (pure) <i>stanya</i>	Holds ideal in all qualities

According to Acharya Kashyapa, as Amrita was produced during the Samudra manthana as an essence of all the Aushadhas, in the same way *Stanya* is formed as an essence or nectar of all the Aushadhas in the Kukshi of the mother, and comes out through the Breast. Therefore, *Stanya* is said to be *Jeevanam* i.e. life, as it provides complete nourishment, strength and increase *Ojas*.

III. 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.⁶

IV. COMPOSITION OF BREAST MILK

Human milk is not a uniform body fluid but a secretion of the mammary gland of changing composition. Foremilk differs from hindmilk, and colostrum is strikingly different from transitional and mature milk. Milk changes with time of day and during the course of lactation. It consists not only of nutrients, such as proteins, lipids, carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins, and trace elements but also contains numerous immune-related components such as sIgA, leukocytes, oligosaccharides, lysozyme, lactoferrin, interferon-g, nucleotides, cytokines, and others.

Human milk also contains essential fatty acids, enzymes, hormones, growth factors, polyamines, and other biologically active compounds.

- Contents of breast milk-

Human milk contains two types of proteins: whey and casein. Approximately 60% is whey, while 40% is casein. Lactoferrin inhibits the growth of bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract.

Secretory IgA also works to protect the infant from viruses and bacteria, specifically those that the baby, mom, and family are exposed to. It also helps to protect against E. Coli and possibly allergies. Other immunoglobulins, including IgG and IgM, in breast milk also help protect against bacterial and viral infections.

Breast milk rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids.it is necessary for brain development, myelination of nervous system. It also contains omega2 & omega 6fatty acids. Lactose is the primary carbohydrate found in human milk... Lactose helps to decrease the amount of unhealthy bacteria in the stomach, which improves the absorption of calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium.

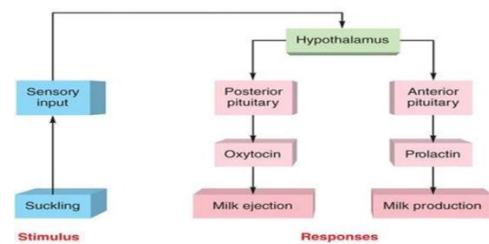


Fig. 1. Mechanism of breast feeding⁷-

- Stanapana vidhi (Methods of Breastfeeding)-

In Ayurveda, there is a concept of the Jatakarma Samskara. According to Acharya Charaka, after following the Navajata shishu paricharya (basic resuscitative procedures), the Jatakarma Samskara is performed by allowing the baby to lick unequal amounts of sacredly enchanted Madhu (honey) and ghrita. Thereafter, the baby is allowed to feed milk from the right breast first. Hence, we can conclude that Charaka also believed that the breastfeeding should be started as soon as the baby is ready to suck and mother is well enough to be suckle.

Early feeding establishes emotional bonding between the mother and the baby, it prevents neonatal hypoglycaemia, provides warmth to baby by skin to skin contact and immunoglobulins which provide immunity against various infection and facilitate lactation.

- Positions of Breastfeeding 8-

1. Cradle hold - the baby should be held horizontally facing the mother. When nursing from the right breast, right arm should be used to hold the baby, followed by baby's head should rest on the forearm, while supporting his back with the same forearm and holding his bottom with the hand.
2. The transitional hold - the baby should be held horizontally facing the mother. When nursing from the right breast, the left arm should be used to hold the baby. His back should be supported with the left forearm, while placing the thumb and fingers at the base of the baby's head, below his ears.
3. The football hold - the baby should be held under the mother's arm and let him face towards the breast and should be supported the with pillow underneath. The baby should be held close to the mother with nose pointing to the nipple and the forearm is used to support his back and neck, and the hand to hold his head. This position is suitable for mothers who have had Caesarean Section, since it does not put pressure on the abdomen.
4. The side lying hold (Lying down position)- Baby and mother should lie on their sides facing each other. The mother should be relaxed with no muscles straining, while keeping her back and hips in a straight line (e.g. place pillow under her head, behind her back & between her bent knees) and the baby needs to be well supported and secure (e.g.

tuck a rolled-up towel or small pillow firmly behind his back, to keep him in position). To assist with latch-on, the opposite hand should be used to support the breast (right hand for left breast & vice-versa).

Any Breastfeeding position is acceptable, provided mother is comfortable and baby is well attached to the breast.

V. PROHIBITION OF MULTIPLE BREAST FEEDING

The child should not be fed by the breast milks of frequently changing women as that is said to cause unsuitability resulting into several diseases. DHATRI (Wet nurse or Governess): Dhatri, otherwise called as upamatha means a female caretaker of an infant.

Significance of Dhatri: Dhatri is absolutely necessary for breast fed infants, whose mother is diseased, or breast milk reduced or totally absent.

VI. 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. The healthiest form of milk for human newborns is Stanya (human breast milk). Sucking and swallowing milk is possible for babies because they have a sucking reflex. 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.^{9,10}

Nutritional benefits of breast milk-

- It provides a unique and specific formula of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.
- Breast milk supports the baby's health because it is easy to digest.
- It has the right amount of fat, sugar, water, protein and vitamins for baby's development.
- Promotes healthy weight gain.

- Contains substances that naturally soothes the baby.
- Contains antibodies that protect against infection and boosts immunity.
- Breastfeeding provides health benefits and prevention of acute physical illnesses including gastrointestinal illnesses, respiratory tract infections etc to infants.
- Breastfeeding may also prevent infants from developing chronic diseases such as asthma, allergies, and obesity.

Role in child development –

- Breastfeeding also impacts social and emotional development in children.
- The initiation of breastfeeding immediately after birth reduces the risk for cognitive impairment among children.
- Absence or short duration of exclusive breastfeeding might be associated with the development of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- Breastfeeding experience has been associated with improved cognitive abilities, facilitated brain development, and a reduced risk for antisocial behaviour and atypical social development including ASD.

Benefits for mother –

- Breastfeeding has been reported to impact mood and stress reactivity in mothers.
- Breastfeeding mothers report reductions in anxiety, negative mood, and stress when compared to formula-feeding mothers
- Breastfeeding is also thought to facilitate maternal sensitivity and secure attachment between mother and child
- Breastfeeding moms are less likely to be diagnosed with postpartum depression.
- Quicker recovery from childbirth: Breastfeeding produces the hormone oxytocin which helps the uterus contract after delivery. This helps it return to its normal size and reduces the amount of vaginal bleeding after delivery.
- Establishing trust: Breastfeeding parents learn to read their infant's cues, and babies learn to trust caregivers. This helps the mother to shape baby's early behaviour.

- Stanyapnayana (Weaning)

Weaning or complementary feeding may define as the gradual introduction of semi- solid and solid diet along with breastfeeding to meet the growing nutritional demand of the baby. Usually weaning is started at the age of 6 months. Weaning is also explained in Ayurveda, Vagbhata told that gradual weaning should be started after tooth eruption and child should be provided with cow's or goat's milk with Laghu and Bruhana diet.

CONCLUSION

With the help of all the above information we can conclude that breastmilk is the only natural and complete source of nutrition for the baby up to the age of 6 months and continuation of breastfeeding as long as mutually possible is beneficial for the healthy growth and development of the baby. For a better future of children, we should take care of them in the infancy, as it is the period of rapid physical and mental growth and for this a healthy nutrition and immunological support is utmost, and all these can be provided by the human breast milk.

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