

STANYAKSHAYA: AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE ON INSUFFICIENT BREAST MILK

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ABSTRACT

Breast milk is considered the ideal nutrition for neonates and plays a vital role in their growth, development, and immunity. Ayurveda describes *Stanya* as the *Upadhatu* of *Rasa Dhatu* and emphasizes its importance in infant nourishment. *Stanya Kshaya* refers to inadequate secretion of breast milk and can adversely affect infant health. Various etiological factors such as improper diet, fasting, stress, grief, and depletion of *Rasa Dhatu* contribute to this condition. Ayurvedic classics mention several formulations for improving lactation, among which *Vidarikand churna* and *Shatavari churna* are considered highly effective. Both drugs possess *Madhura Rasa*, *Sheeta Virya*, and *Madhura Vipaka*, which help in nourishment and enhancement of breast milk secretion. The present review highlights the Ayurvedic and pharmacological aspects of *Vidarikand churna* (*Pueraria tuberosa*) and *Shatavari churna* (*Asparagus racemosus*) in the management of *Stanya Kshaya*.

KEYWORDS: *Stanya Kshaya*, *Vidarikand*, *Shatavari*, Ayurveda, Lactational insufficiency, Galactagogue.

INTRODUCTION

Breast milk is an ideal food for neonates. It is the best gift that a mother can give to her baby. It contains all the nutrients for normal growth and development of a baby from the time of birth to the first 6 months of life.^[1] Breast milk provides numerous advantages to both the mother and the infant, akin to nectar. Classical Ayurvedic literatures have highly praised breast milk and suggested exclusive breastfeeding for six months, with continuing for a year or more.^[2] Goals set by the World Health Organization; Healthy people 2010 included a 70% breast feeding initiation rate, a 50% contribution rate six months after birth and 25% contribution rate 12 months after birth. When we scrutinize the literatures of *Ayurveda* we come to a conclusion that all of our great sages accept *stanya* as the *upadhatu* of *Rasa dhatu*. *Ayurveda* explains the importance of *Stanya* through its main functions i.e., *Pushti* and *Jeevana*. According to *Charaka*, that milk is said to be the best quality if it has normal colour, smell, taste and touch. Pure milk or *Shuddha stanya* is said to be completely dissolved in water when it is mixed with water because of its watery nature. Such milk is also said to be very good, nourishing and that also enhances the health of the baby.^[3] As *Rasa dhatu* is formed first among all *dhatu*s it is named as *Adidhatu* or *Prathama dhatu*. *Acharya Sushruta* opines that, *Rasa dhatu* is formed after the digestion of food. The sweet essence part of this *rasa dhatu* circulates entire body by the action of *vayu* and when it reaches breast it is termed as *Stanya* (Breast milk).^[4] *Dalhana* specifies the type of *vayu* responsible for this process is *vyana vayu*. If *Rasa dhatu* formation is disturbed due to any reason it also disturbs the normal functioning of its *Upadhatu stanya*.^[5] Various abnormalities of *Stanya* are being described in our literatures like *Stanyakshaya*, *Stanyavridhi*, *Stanyadushti* etc. Among these different conditions pertaining to *Stanya*, *Stanyakshaya* is one, which is taken into consideration for this study.^[6]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

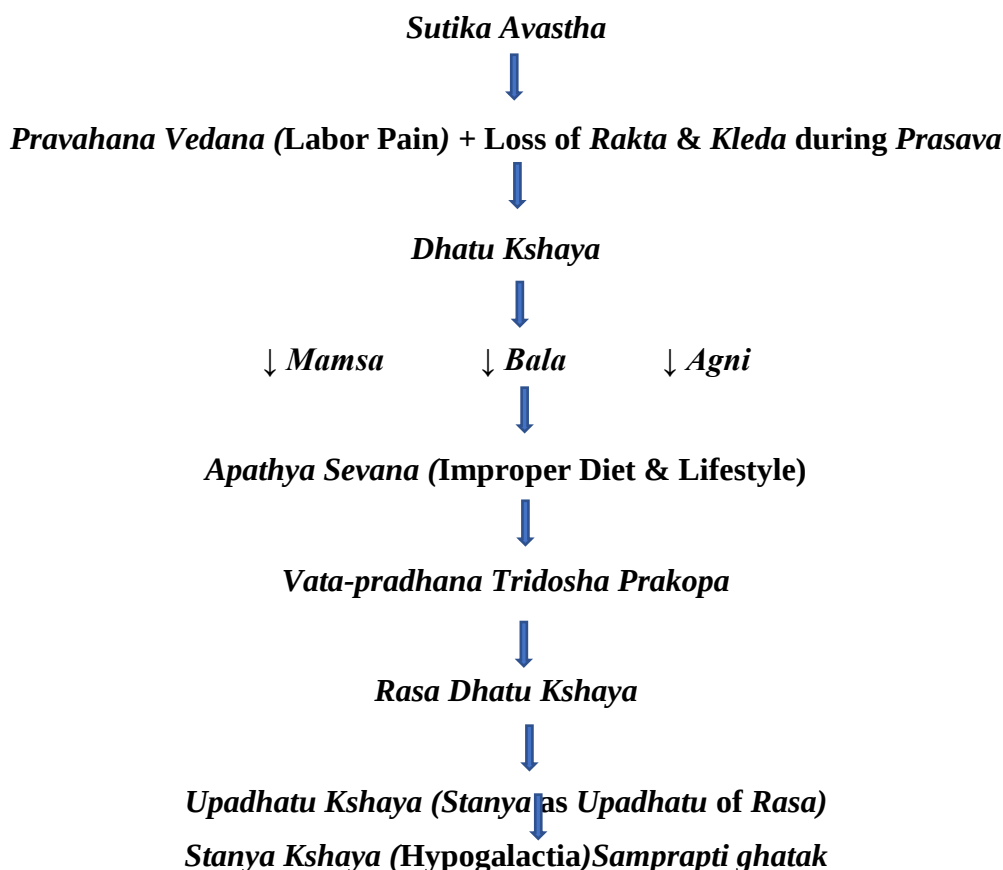
This review article on **Stanyakshaya (lactational insufficiency)** is based on a comprehensive review of classical Ayurvedic literature and relevant modern scientific publications. Ayurvedic references were collected from authoritative texts such as **Charaka Samhita**, **Sushruta Samhita**, **Ashtanga Hridaya**, **Ashtanga Sangraha**, **Kashyapa Samhita**, and other standard commentaries and compendia to understand the concept of **Stanya** and **Stanyakshaya**. Information regarding the origin and physiology of *Stanya*, *Nidana* (etiological factors), *Samprapti* (pathogenesis), *Lakshana* (clinical features), and *Chikitsa* (management) was systematically compiled and critically analyzed.

STANYAKSHAYA

Stanya is the *Upa Dhatu* of *Rasa Dhatu*. Ayurvedic texts elucidated the significance of *Stanya* through its primary functions, *Pushti* and *jeevana*. People say that *Rasa Dhatu* is *Addidhatu*, which is the first *Dhatu*. If the development of *Rasa Dhatu* is disrupted, its *UpDhatu Stanya* is likewise disrupted. *Stanyakshaya* is a *Vikruti* of *Stanya*. The term *Kshaya* originates from the *Dhatu* '*Kshaya*,' signifying 'to diminish' or 'to cease.' *Acharya Charaka* defines '*Kshaya*' as *Hrasa* or *Nyuata*.^[07] *Stanyakshaya* occurs when *Stanya* is less than its regular flow. The *Shabadkalpa Druma* says that the word "*Alpata*" means "*Kshudrapramana*," which means "less in quantity." *Acharya Sushruta* elucidates the characteristics of *Stanyakshaya* within the context of *Dosha Dhatu Mala Kshaya Vriddhi Vijnanam* in *Sutra Sthana*.^[08]

NIDANA^{[09][10][11][12]}**Table No. 3. 4: Nidana of Stanya Kshaya.**

Aaharaj	<i>Ruksha aanapana, Karshana</i>
Viharaj	<i>Langhana, Vyayama, Atiyoga of shodhana karma, Aptarpana</i>
Mansika	<i>Krodha, Bhaya, Shoka, Avatshalya</i>

Samprapti of Stanyakshaya^[13]

• <i>Dosha Vata</i>	• <i>Udbhavsthana - Pakwashaya</i>
• <i>Dushya - Rasa</i>	• <i>Vyaktasthana – Stana</i>
• <i>Srotas - Rasvaha, Stanyavaha</i>	• <i>Rogmarga - Madhyam</i>
• <i>Srotodushti - Sanga</i>	• <i>Sadhya-asadhyata - Sadhya</i>

Lakshana of Stanyakshaya^[14]

Laxity of breasts, decrease in quantity and absence of milk secretion are features of Stanyaksaya.

Chikitsa^{[15][16]}

Sleshma Vardhaka Dravyas^[17]

Sura, Sali, Mamsa, Ksheera, Sarkara, Asava, Dahi is beneficial for Stanyakshaya.^[18]

Vamana is contraindicated in cases of Stanyakshaya, Stanyanasha (as *Vamana* is *Kaphahara*).^[19]

Kwatha of *Virana, Sali, Sastika, Itsuvalika, Darbha, Kusa, Kasa, Gundra, Itkata, Katna* are *Stanya janana dravyas* (*Stanyajanan Mahakashaya*).^[20]

Anya Chikitsa & Pathya - Apathya Aahara vihara.

According to Acharya Charaka

All *Madya* except *Sidhu*, vegetables, cereals, *Mamsa* of wild/marshy land or Water

Food which are predominantly *Drava* (liquid), *Madhura* and *Amla Rasa*

Ksirini Ausadhas (which have latex), milk is advised, avoid exercise.

Kwatha of *Ksira Janana Dravyas* like *Vrana, Sali, Sastika, Itsu, Valika, Darbha, Kusa, Kasa, Gundra, Utkata*.^[21]

According to Acharya Susrutha

Woman should be happy and cheerful

Yava (barley), wheat, *Sali, Sastika, Mamsa Rasa, Sura, Kanji, Pinyaka, Lasuna, Kaseruka, Srigataka, Bisa, Vidarikanda, Madhuka, Satawari, Nalika, Alabu, Kalasaka* etc. Should be given.^[22]

Asthapana Vasti is advised.^[23]

According to Acharya Vagbhata I

All the wines (except *Sidhu*), *Anupa Mansa*, *Madhura*, *Amla*, *Lavana* and liquid predominant diet, *Ksirinya Ausadhas*, milk, avoid exertion, happiness and cheerfulness.^[24]

Asthapana Vasti can be given *Stanyanasha*.^[25]

According to Acharya Vagbhata II

Mamsa Rasa

All wines (except *Sidhu*), *Anupa*, milk, *Kshirinya Ausadhas*, avoidance of Sorrow, anger, fear, exertion etc.^[26]

According to Acharya Kashyapa^[27]

Nadika cooked with *Guda* mixed with *Hingu* and *Jatiphala*.

Milk, *Mamsarasa*, wines

Milk treated with *Vajikarana* drugs.

Use of *Ghrita* and oil.

Asthapana Vasti can be used

Madhura, *Lavana* and liquid diet.

All wine (except *sidhu*).

All leafy vegetables (except *Siddharthaka*).

Meat soup (except hog and buffalo)

Lasuna, *Palandu*.

Good sleep, avoid anger, fear, grief, exertion.

Milk cooked with *Kwatha* of *Vata Twak* etc. Late yielding trees mixed with *Sauwarcala*, *Vida*, *Lavana*, *Guda* and *Ghrta* with cooked *sali* rice. By use of this preparation women whose breast are dry starts yielding milk.

Milk cooked with *Kwatha* Of *Sali*, *Sastika*, *Darbha*, *Kusa*, *Gundra*, *Itkata*, *Sarira* *Virana* *Iksu*, roots of *Kusa* and *Kasa*. This preparation is effective in those who are unable to produce milk or milk vitiated by evil eye.

RESULTS

The present review revealed that *Stanyakshaya* is primarily associated with *Rasa Dhatu Kshaya*, which directly affects the formation of *Stanya* (breast milk). Classical Ayurvedic texts identify improper diet, excessive physical exertion, fasting, mental stress, grief, fear,

and Vata aggravation as the major etiological factors responsible for inadequate breast milk production. The reviewed literature also indicates that Shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*) and Vidarikand (*Pueraria tuberosa*) possess Stanyajanana (galactagogue) properties due to their Madhura Rasa, Sheeta Virya, and Madhura Vipaka. These drugs help nourish Rasa Dhatu, improve maternal strength, and promote lactation.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda considers Stanya as the Upadhatu of Rasa Dhatu; therefore, any impairment in Rasa Dhatu ultimately leads to Stanyakshaya. The classical management emphasizes correction of the root pathology through Brimhana therapy, Vata-pacifying measures, proper diet, adequate rest, and psychological well-being. Shatavari and Vidarikand are widely recommended because of their nourishing, Rasayana, and Balya properties. Modern pharmacological studies also support their galactagogue, antioxidant, adaptogenic, and immunomodulatory effects, suggesting their usefulness in improving lactation. Thus, Ayurvedic management offers a holistic approach by addressing both the physiological and psychological factors responsible for lactational insufficiency.

CONCLUSION

Stanyakshaya is an important postpartum condition that can adversely affect infant nutrition and maternal health. Ayurvedic literature provides a comprehensive understanding of its etiology, pathogenesis, and management. The available classical and scientific evidence suggests that Shatavari Churna and Vidarikand Churna are promising natural galactagogues for enhancing breast milk secretion. However, further well-designed clinical studies are required to validate their efficacy and safety according to modern scientific standards. Integrating Ayurvedic principles with appropriate breastfeeding counselling may provide an effective and holistic approach to the management of Stanyakshaya.

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