



A LITERARY REVIEW: STANYA (UPDHATU OF RASA)

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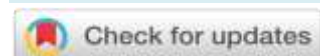
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ABSTRACT

Ayurved emphasizes curing diseases as well as preserving one's health. Ayurved mentions *dosha-dhatu-mala*, the main triad responsible for creating disease when imbalanced as well as preserving one's health when balanced. Updhatus is one of the peculiar concepts described in Ayurved. The bodily elements responsible for the sustenance of life, derived from dhatus and performing similar functions as that of dhatus, but in a limited capacity are called Updhatus. Updhatus are considered secondary to dhatus as they do not nourish any other entity in the same body. Stanya i.e., breastmilk is said to be updhatu derived from rasa dhatu. The characteristic of the class Mammalia is the ability to produce milk i.e stanya, an externally secreted fluid designed specifically to nourish the young ones. Explaining stages of life, new-borns are described as Kshirad and Kshirannada for the first few months of their life. That's why stanya 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 complete meal for new-borns. The focus of the current review was on the idea of stanya, or breast milk, as it is described in Ayurvedic literature, and its relevance today.

Keywords: Updhatu, Stanya, Rasa Dhatu, Breastmilk, Ayurved

INTRODUCTION

According to the various Acharayas Dosha, Dhatu & Mala are the fundamental and the three pillars of our body. Dhatus are the most stable constituents of the body. The word 'Upadhatu' consists of two parts with Prefix "Upa" and the word "Dhatu". The literary meaning of "Upa" is towards, near to, by the side of, resemblance, and nearness, with the idea of subordination and inferiority.⁹ The bodily elements responsible for the sustenance of life, performing similar functions as those of dhatus, but in a very limited capacity and hence considered secondary to dhatus are known as Updhatus.⁽¹⁾

The raja and stanya are the Updhatus of rasa, kandara and sira of rakta, vasa and sapta tvacha are the Updhatus of mansa, while the snayu are the Updhatus of meda dhatu. Sharangadhara describes the Updhatus stanya, raja, vasa, sweda, danta, kesha, and oja are produced from rasa, rakta, mansa, meda, asthi, majja and shukra respectively.

Raja & Stanya are said to be Updhatus of Rasa dhatu and are present only in females. They are derived by means of specific functions attributed to female physiology that is reproduction. They are called Upadhatu because they derive their nourishment from the Prasadaja portion of Rasa Dhatu. Both entities are present in a liquid state. These two entities are functional ones. These two entities are excretory in nature. After a certain period, they are to be expelled from the body, otherwise, they function as Mala and will be pathological for the body.⁽²⁾

Stanya or 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 Organization.⁽³⁾ Lactation is a physiological process that is linked to a person's psychological state and lifestyle. According to some observational studies it is seen that approximately 40% of women suffer from low breastmilk production. The main reasons behind this are today's hectic lifestyle, stress, strained day-to-day activities, and poor and

unhealthy eating habits. Similarly, in ayurveda classics Stanya ksaya (decreased breast milk) is said to be caused by the mother's psychological status (Krodha, shoka, Bhaya, Irsha, and Avatsalyatwa), her diet, and her physiological condition, according to acharya Sushruta. Ayurveda offers wholesome and holistic help in this through aahara (diet), vihara (lifestyle changes), and aushadh (medicine). So, the present review is focused on the Ayurvedic concept of stanya and its importance in the present era.

Materials and methods –

This topic is examined using a variety of Ayurvedic classic literatures. To gain a thorough understanding of the concept of stanya in relation to breastfeeding, resources on the subject, as well as its significance and other related subjects, were obtained, reviewed, and discussed.

Stanya updhatu of rasa dhatu –

Nirukti of the word 'stanya' – स्तने जायति इति स्तन्यं । The word 'stanya' literally refers to a substance produced in the stana i.e., the breasts.

Definitions of 'stanya' -

रसात् स्तन्यं । (च.चि.15/17)⁽⁴⁾ स्तन्यं क्षीरं रसस्य उपधातु । (शारंगधर 1/15,16 आढमल्ल टिका)⁽⁵⁾

Updhatu of Rasadhatu is breastmilk.

स्तन्यं रजश्च नारीणां काले भवति गच्छति । (शारंगधर 1/15,16)⁽⁶⁾

The stanya, even if produced as an updhatu of rasa, manifests only in certain physical conditions. Another unique property of stanya is that it is produced only in female bodies and not in male counterparts.

Synonyms – *dugdha*, *paya*, *ksheera*, etc.

Stanya pramana (Quantity of *stanya* or breast milk):

Amount of *stanya* is two *Anjali*⁽⁷⁾

Properties of *stanya* –

Breast milk or *Stanya* is the ideal meal for newborns. The stanya is a fluid substance with the predominant attribute of 'drava'. According to acharya Charaka, it stimulates energy (*Snigdha*), is anabolic (*Brahmana*), wholesome (*satmya*), and unctuous. It can also be used to treat *netra vikara*, *pitta*, and *rakta* illnesses.⁽⁸⁾

According to acharya sushruta, breast milk that mixes well with water immediately, which is white, sweet in

taste, has astringent *anurasa*, shows no colours, and is pleasant to look at is good quality breastmilk.⁽⁹⁾

Acharya vagbhat describes the ideal breastmilk as which mixes well when dropped in water immediately.⁽¹⁰⁾ '*Stanyasampat*' concept is described in *charaka Samhita* in brief which states pure and unadulterated breast milk is with the physiological appearance of color, odor, taste, and touch and if dropped into water; assimilates in water due to its normal density. Such breast milk is nourishing to a baby and is called good quality breast milk.⁽¹¹⁾

Good quality is realized by:

Color: clear milk with milky white color

Odor: typical milky odor.

Taste: sweet.

Touch: like water and body temperature.

Taste for confirmation of the good quality of breast milk:

Put some drops of breast milk in water. If it gets dispersed in water immediately, without any streaks, confirm that it is of good quality.

Formation of Stanya –

According to Sushruta, two vessels convey milk from the breasts. It is secreted in its breasts of females, so it is called 'Stanya'. Excel part of Rasadhātu, sweet, generated from digested food, after circulating in the entire body by the action of vyana vayu, when reaches two breasts, it is called 'Stanya'.⁽¹²⁾

According to the notion of garbh aposhana, the Aahara ingested by Garbini fulfils three roles. They are as follows:

• Matru pushti • Garbha pushti and • Stana Pushti.⁽¹³⁾

The stanya is produced immediately after delivery. The flow of the secretion is stimulated by the sight, touch, or even the memory of the new-born, from the breast of the mother, it is also an essence of the diet of the mother, produced for the nourishment of the child. The stanya is also described to be all providing in the female body, similar to the dhātu shukra. This stanya circulates throughout the body along with ahararasa in a very subatomic and unmanifest form.⁽¹⁴⁾

It gets manifested and is secreted from the breasts as a result of stimulation by the sight or touch and '*Sneh*' i.e., love for the baby. Ceaseless love for the

baby is supposed to be one of the important factors in the production of breastmilk.⁽¹⁵⁾ Hence, the breasts and the vessels located in the breasts which help in the flow of stanya are also termed the main locations of the stanya. Kasyapa describes these vessels as 'dugdha hārini nādi. According to Harita⁽¹⁶⁾, whatever the women consume, 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. Among the ten pranayatanas (seat of life), Bhela has included stanya.⁽¹⁷⁾

Stanya pravritti –

With the onset of puberty, the female bodies experience marked development of breast tissue. Around the age of 13 years, with the start of menarche, the breast starts developing. The secretion of stanya from the breasts does not take place in the normal physical cycles of the female body. These menstrual cycles stop temporarily with pregnancy occurring as a result of fertilization of the shukra and shonita. In this pregnant condition, the breasts get enlarged and show marked changes with specific growth. With the delivery of the fetus from the womb, the breast turns active and secretes milk or stanya.

Sushruta used the example of Sukra dhatu to help people understand the lactation process. Similar to shukra dhatu, when love or memory of her new-born arises in the mind of the mother milk is secreted through her breasts.⁽¹⁸⁾ The mother's affection for her infant is a significant impact on the production and ejaculation of breast milk. Many psychogenic variables can suppress or enhance milk ejection by inhibiting or stimulating oxytocin production. Loving thoughts of the baby, hearing the baby, seeing the baby, and the mother being relaxed/comfortable/assured are milk-enhancing variables. On the contrary, worry, tension, pain, and doubt are inhibiting factors for the Milk ejection reflex.

Functions of 'stanya' -

स्तन्यं स्तनयोरापीनत्वजननं जीवनं चेति। (सु.सू. 15/5)⁽¹⁹⁾

The development of breasts and providing proper nourishment for the new-born baby are the two main functions of stanya.

The growth and development of the new-born infant are dependent on the stanya or breast milk. The agni and the annavaha srotasa of the infant are still in their developing stages and hence unable to digest any substance other than the stanya or the breast milk from the mother. The milk from any other animal is unable to provide optimum nutrition to the infant as the milk from the breasts of its mother.⁹

जीवनं बालानां तेषामेव स्त्रीक्षीरसात्म्यत्वात् (सु.सू. 15/5 डल्हन टीका)⁽²⁰⁾

Therefore, Dalhana states that all the bodily elements of the baby are nourished properly only from breast milk. This goes to say that breast milk is very nutritious and contains elements for the growth and replenishment of all bodily factors. This may be so because the stanya is also produced simultaneously at the time of production of rasa dhātu from the ahararasa.

Stanya as updhatu of Rasa dhatu –

There are a few reasons why ayurveda considers stanya as updhatu of the Rasa dhatu and no other –

- Flow and production of breastmilk are affected by psychological factors similar to rasa dhatu. Rasa dhatu is said to be vitiated by the main reason of 'Atichinta' i.e., excessive worry. Similarly, breastmilk also gets affected by negative emotions like worry, anger, pain, fear, hate, or stress.
- Clinically it is seen when rasadhātu wanes, breastmilk loses its quantity and quality.
- As the main function of rasa dhatu is 'Prinana', replenishment of all 7 dhatus and other body entities, stanya functions in the same way for the baby.
- As rasa dhatu conveys all nutritive ingredients to the entire body, stanya does the same for the baby.
- In pregnancy, Raja deviates and boosts breastmilk for the nourishment of the baby as raja and stanya both are said to be Updhatus of rasa dhatu.

Breastmilk and breastfeeding –

The characteristic of the class Mammalia is the ability to produce milk. The provision of milk frees the mother from the necessity of providing a specialized environment for the rearing of the young. It also allows mother and new-born to build an intense mother-child bond through skin-to-skin contact and interaction. Milk composition is species-specific. In hu-

mans, it is becoming increasingly clear that breast milk is the most appropriate source of nutrition up to the age of 6 months. Many components of human milk like protein lactoferrin, growth factors, long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids, bile salt stimulated lipase, and anti-infectious oligosaccharides and glycoconjugates are not duplicated in the formula milk.⁽²¹⁾ Feeding colostrum is necessary to provide passive immune protection to the young until their immune systems become mature. In mammals, breast milk is a natural food for newborns. Milk is secreted by mammary glands. Breastfeeding should be continued for 2 years or beyond and the proper nutrition of lactating mothers should be ensured. Breastfeeding promotes health, helps to prevent disease, and reduces health care and feeding costs.⁽²²⁾ "The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Dietetic Association promote breastfeeding as the BEST source of infant nutrition"⁽²³⁾

DISCUSSION

Although the Upadhatus are technically secondary tissues or sub-tissues, they perform vital bodily activities. Numerous bodily functions would not be possible without Upadhatus. Stanya is helpful in lactation, aartava in regular cleansing and maintenance of health in a woman and also in reproduction, siras help in circulation, kandaras and snayu help in supporting the body and holding the body tissues together, vasa help in lubrication and twak in enveloping the body, protection and beautification and sandhis help in our movements and locomotion.

Growth has its highest rate of increase in infancy. Thus, nutritional problems are most liable to occur during this period. It is essential to take proper care of the child for nutrition. 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 and stanya or breastmilk is the best and most natural way of nourishing a new-born.

Raja and Stanya are *Stree vishishta* Updhatu. Normal and proper *stanya nirmitti* and *pravritti* are indications of *Swastha vastha*. It is one of the most essential factors for a healthy progeny. Women are ruling the

globe in this high-tech era by juggling jobs and family obligations. Only women, not their male counterparts, are gifted with the ability to reproduce and to feed a new-born. Therefore, the mother's nutrition, which should be geared towards the health of the next generation, is primarily responsible for the nutrition of the baby.

CONCLUSION

Dosha dhatu and mala are said to be the three pillars of health in Ayurved. Dhatu is the major component of the body on which the whole body grows up above. Updhatu is a derivative of Dhatu. The respective Dhatu nourishes their Updhatu, if Dhatu is in an excellent state, then its Updhatu production and nourishment will also be in an excellent state. Stanya (breastmilk) is the Updhatu of Rasa Dhatu; its quality, and quantity excellence depends on the metabolic and functional status of Rasa Dhatu.

Ayurveda classic literatures describe the stanya and stanapan process in detail. It also states the qualities of pure and unadulterated breastmilk. It also discusses the production and secretion of stanya and the causes behind it. Disorders of stanya and its effect on new-born are also mentioned in all main classics. Also, treatment for these disorders is also discussed in brief. 'Stanyakshyaya' or low breastmilk production and its causes are mentioned also there is a description of a large number of the drugs, diet, and behaviour regimens that are described to be Stanyajanana or breast milk promoters. Stanya is the Stri Vishistha updhatu so proper stanya nirmiti and pravritti are very important for new-borns and the mother's overall health.

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