



Review Article

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BREAST MILK AFFECTS CHILD MORBIDITY STATUS: AN UNEXPLORED EVIDENCE FROM AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Breast milk is the main diet of infants as it provides all the nutrients for normal growth and development of a baby from the time of birth to the first 6 months of life. This dynamic fluid provides a diverse array of bioactive substances to the developing infant during critical periods of brain, immune system and gut development. In Ayurveda though breast milk is vital for children and infants but it may be vitiated with Dosha (regulatory functional factors of the body) due to the faulty lifestyle of the Dhatri (wet-nurse or mother) which may lead to various type of morbidities in child according to predominance of Dosha. Ancient Ayurveda scholars have also mentioned effect of breast milk according to taste and texture along with management of morbidities caused by these predominance's of Dosha. Ayurveda have stressed very much on this aspect and have given a detailed account of abnormalities of breast milk and their consequences. Knowledge of this fact is of key significance for the proper growth and development of a child. Therefore, evidences from Ayurveda have been compiled in this article to understand the effect of breast milk on child morbidity status.

Keywords: Stanya, Dhatri, Morbidity, Breast milk

INTRODUCTION

Breast milk is thought to be the best form of nutrition key for neonates and infants. The properties of human milk facilitate the transition of life from in utero to ex utero. Human milk is a unique, species-specific, complex nutritive fluid with immunologic and growth-promoting properties. This unique fluid actually evolves to meet the changing needs of the baby during growth and maturation. Ensuring exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months has a potential to reduce under-5 mortality rate by 13%, by far the most effective intervention that is known to reduce newborn and child deaths.¹

Ayurveda holds a different fact that although the breast milk is vital for a child, but it also gets vitiated with Vata, Pitta or Kapha Dosha due to the faulty diet and lifestyle of the lactating mother which when fed to a child, leads to various types of morbidities in the child. Consumption of vitiated breast milk may cause various systemic diseases along with inadequate growth and development of the child. Thus, it becomes necessary to provide pure milk to the infant. Ancient scholars have stressed very much on this aspect and have given a detailed account of abnormalities of breast milk and their consequences. Such emphasis has not been given by modern scientists in this regard.

Etiopathogenesis

Charaka and other scholars like Sushruta, Vagbhata and Madhava etc. have described the following etiological factors, responsible for vitiation of breast milk.²⁻⁴

Nutritional factor

- (i) Consumption of non-congenital, unusual or unfavorable and incompatible foods and

- (ii) over eating.
- (iii) Use of salty, sour, hot, alkaline and humid or putrefied articles.
- (iv) Use of Paramanna a dish made of rice, milk and sugar boiled together.
- (v) Use of dishes made of jaggery, oil, curd, abhishyandi articles, meat of wild and aquatic animals living in marshy places.

Physical factors

Physical disorders, awakening in the night, suppression of natural urges and attempt to excrete feces etc. in the absence of their urge. Absence of exercise, trauma and emaciation.

Psychological factors

Over anxiety, anger etc. the doshas get vitiated, due to above factors and move through Kshira-vaha-siras, vitiated the milk and produce 8 types of milk disorders.

Classification of Breast Milk Disorders

Most of the ancient scholars have classified disorders of breast milk, according to dominance of Dosha or physical characters of milk. Charaka^{5,6} has described 8 types of milk disorders due to vitiation of Dosha. Probably this classification of Ashta-Kshira Dosha has been done on the basis of prominent features of responsible Dosha. Sushruta⁷ has included Abhighataja (trauma), while Vagbhata and Madhava have added dwandvaja-stanya dusthi^{8,9}. Only Kasyapa¹⁰ has described breast milk vitiated due to grahas doshas (possession/ psychiatry).

Vagbhata¹¹ has described the treatment of 14 types of Stanya vitiation-tiktanurasa, kashayanurasa, fenil, vicchinna, plavamana, tanu, sandra, grathita, tamravabhasa, amlanurasa, katukanurasa,

bhrsosna, lavananurasa and tantumata. Harita¹² has mentioned only 5 disorders – Ghana, alpa, ushna, kshara and amla.

Character of Breast Milk vitiated with Various Doshas

Character of milk, vitiated with various doshas are described in the following¹³⁻¹⁶ Table 1 - given below as underneath herewith.

Milk vitiation with two doshas may have the symptoms of both the doshas. Similarly, milk vitiated with all three doshas together exhibits, physical characters as well as symptom of all the doshas. Sushruta has described that milk vitiated due to trauma causes similar symptom as vitiated with vata.

Milk vitiated with grahas: Kasyapa¹⁷ shown in Table 2 is the only physician who has described the effects of various grahas first affects the Mother / Dhatri and vitiates her breast milk. Consumption of such breast milk vitiated by grahas, may cause various complications in the child. Details are summarized in the following table given here underneath.

Since the description of Kashyapa Samhita about milk disorder is very short, therefore it is very difficult to give any probable interpretation. However, the description indicates that affliction of grahas may affect the child by vitiating different doshas.

Diseases Likely to Develop in Children Due to Vitiating Milk

The consumption of milk, vitiated with doshas may produce several disorders in child which are similar to the respective doshas. (Table 3-6)

These five disorders shown in Table 6 can be included under the disorders caused by Dosha. Alpa Dosha may be considered under Vatika; Ghana under Kaphaja; Ushna (hotness) and Amla (sourness) under Pittaja disorders. Though the Kshara is the quality of Vata, however, the symptoms exhibit features of Kapha, thus this may be considered as Vata-Kaphaja.

Different colors and taste of milk may appear due to vitiation with various Doshas. Therefore, some scholars have described the disorders according to Doshas, while others by observing the specific features i.e., color and taste of the vitiated milk.

By observing the clinical manifestations appearing in children due to consumption of vitiated milk, following interpretations may be given:

1. Milk disorders due to vitiation of Vata, indicate that there is deficiency of nutrients in milk, therefore, the child may suffer from emaciation etc. disorders produced due to mal-nourishment.
2. Pittaja Stanya Dushti (milk vitiated with pitta) may occur due to having blood or pus coming due to inflammation or abscess from breast. Thus, the child may suffer from fever etc. disorders.
3. All the milk disorders due to Kapha indicates that this type of vitiated milk have relatively higher fat contents, which may cause mal-absorption of nutrients which may cause oedema, retardation of growth and development, especially hypoproteinemia.

Treatment of Milk disorders

Vitiation of milk is the disorder of Dhatri but child is the sufferer due to intake of milk. Therefore, while treating the Dhatri, the child should also be treated for disorders appeared. Medicines to the children are provided mainly through applying these over tastes of mother's breast.

General Principles

Charaka opinions that for treatment of vitiated doshas, various purificatory measures like- Vamana, Virechana, Asthapana and Anuvasana basti should be used for Dhatri according to predominance of doshas, intensity of vitiation and suitability of measures. The use of purificatory measures to the mother depends upon the severity of vitiated doshas i.e., drastic in excessive aggravation and mild in slight aggravation of doshas¹⁸.

Charaka has also mentioned a group of drugs which specifically indicated for purification of breast milk (any type), which is known as Stanya Shodhana Mahakashaya and should be used as decoction. The Dhatri should be included for emesis, after giving her Snehana, she should be advised for Samsarjana-karma. After performing Snehana again, Virechana should be given, by giving due consideration to vitiates Dosha, Kala and Bala. Samsarjana karma is re-applied, after proper purgation¹⁹.

The process described by Sushruta is slightly different from Charaka. He described that on slightly different from Charaka decoction of Nimba and Magdhika, Mudga is offered on next day. This whole process is repeated for 3, 4 or 6 days, followed by administration of Triphala ghrita²⁰.

Vagbhata has advised purification according to vitiation of dosha^{21,22}. Kashyapa has adopted the principle described by previous scholars and opines that the milk is purified by use of decoction, emesis, purgation, congenial diet and ghrita-medicated with the drugs of Jeevaniya group.²³

Specific Treatment (According to predominance of doshas)

Vagbhata has described the specific treatment of vitiation of milk according to predominance of doshas²⁴.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda, the most ancient and authentic classic of Indian traditional medicine, emphasizes that breast milk also gets vitiated due to deeds of the lactating mother and lots of text is available regarding the causes, types and effects of vitiated breast milk on infant. Evidence from Ayurveda reveals that although breast milk is the complete food for infants and is vital also, still it may get vitiated when the lactating mother uses unwholesome diet and inappropriate lifestyle. Kashyapa says that the health and disease of the child depends upon the Dhatri (mother). Feeding of vitiated breast milk leads to various sufferings in children and which ultimately alter their growth and development. Therefore, the breast milk should be purified and after that only fed to the infants. Therefore, if breast milk is fed judiciously, it can help in proper nutrition and growth and development of a child.

Table 1: Character of Breast Milk vitiated with various Doshas

S. No.	Properties of milk	Vitiating Milk		
		Vata	Pitta	Kapha
1.	Colour	Dark colored or reddish	Bluish, yellowish or reddish	Dense white
2.	Taste	Madhura with slightly Kashaya or Katu tasteless	Sweet with slightly bitter, sour or pungent taste	More slightly salty taste
3.	Smell	No smell	Foul smelling like blood	Smell like ghrita, oil, brain or animal fat
4.	Temperature	Normal slightly cool	warm	Cool
5.	Consistency	Thin	Intermediate	Thick, sticky and fibrinous absent
6.	Foam	Present	Absent	Absent
7.	Viscosity	Less	Intermediate	High
8.	Light/Heavy	Light	Intermediate	Heavy
9.	Water – Test (pouring of milk in glass of water)	Floats	Remains at any level, produces yellow streaks in water	Settles down
Effect on Baby				
General effect		Slightly cooling effect	Heating effect	Cooling effect
Effect on constitution and types of disease		Vata constitution likely to get Vataja disorder	Pitta constitution likely to get Pittaja disorder	Kapha constitution likely to get Kaphaja disorder
General Health		Lean and thin	Thin	Heavy, stool with distended abdomen
Voice		Weak and hoarse		
Stools		Constipated or hunger, diarrhea	Semi-solid loose stools	Constipation
Urine		Dysuria, retention of urine		retention of urine

Table 2: Effect of breast milk vitiated with Grahas

S. No.	Effect of grahas	Properties of vitiating milk	Effect on child
1.	Shakuni	Taste of milk is Katu and Tikta	Kashaya, taste, retention of urine and stool
2.	Skanda	Vitiating milk shows the features of all doshas	Oil colored, strong like color of ghrita, smoky, renowned
3.	Putana	Taste-Swadu	Passes too much urine and stool

Table 3: Diseases likely to develop in children due to vitiating breast milk

S. No.	Milk vitiating with Dosha	Diseases likely to appear
1.	Vata vitiating milk	Flatulence, oliguria, constipation, weak cry, emaciation, suffers from suppression or retention of urine
2.	Pitta vitiating milk	Excessive perspiration, diarrhea, jaundice, feeling of excessive thirst
3.	Kapha vitiating milk	Excessive salivation, always feels sleepy, swelling on face and eyes, vomiting and other disorder of Kapha along with specific disease like Phakka
4.	Milk vitiating with all the three doshas	Kshiralasaka

Table 4: Effect of use of breast milk of different colors / taste, on the child

S. No.	Taste/color of vitiating milk	Effect on child
1.	Madhura rasa (Sweet taste)	Excessive excretion of urine and faces
2.	Kashaya rasa (Astringent taste)	Oliguria and constipation
3.	Amlanurasa	Amlapitta
4.	Katukanurasa	Vomiting, diarrhea, cough
5.	Lavanurasa	Erysipelas, skin rashes, itching
6.	Tamravabhasa	Feeling of compression, cramps, pain in cardiac region
7.	Tantumata	Weakness, dyspnea and cough
8.	Bhrososna	Anamaka, burning, fever and diarrhea
9.	Guru (heaviness)	Lethargy, coryza, excessive thick nasal mucus and Kshiralasaka

Table 5: Eight disorders of milk and their effects on child (as described by Charaka)

S. No.	Milk disorders	Vitiating Dosha	Effect on child
1.	Vairasya (Tastelessness)	Vata	Emaciated, delayed growth
2.	Phena sanghata	Vata	weak cry, retention or suppression of urine, faces and flatus, head disorders of vata and Pinasa (chronic rhinitis)
3.	Ruksha (Dryness)	Vata	Suffers from loss of energy
4.	Vaivaranya (Discoloration)	Pitta	Discoloration of body, excessive sweating and thirst, diarrhea. Body is always hot and no desire for sucking
5.	Daurgandhya (Bad Odour)	Pitta	Anemia and jaundice
6.	Atisnigdha (unctuous)	Kapha	Vomiting, tenesmus, excessive salivation, excessive sleep
7.	Picchila (Sliminess)	Kapha	Excessive expectoration
8.	Guru (Heaviness)	Kapha	Cardiac disorders and other disorders of milk.

Table 6: Five milk disorders (as described by Harita)

S. No.	Abnormalities of milk	Diseases likely to appear in children
1.	Ghana (Thick and dense)	Excessive flatulence, suppression of faces, urine and flatus, dyspnea, cough and distention of abdomen.
2.	Alpa (Small amount)	Emaciation, misery, dyspnea, diarrhea with fever
3.	Ushna (Hot)	Fever, emaciation, growth retardation, diarrhea with fever.
4.	Kshara	Eye disorders, excessive discharge from mouth and nose. itching ulcers
5.	Amla (Sour)	Not described

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