



Review Article

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A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON BALA POSHANA

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ABSTRACT

The term 'Poshana' means nutrition. It is defined as providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth. According to Acharya Kashyapa, though one may be taking medicine, one can't exist without food. It means the modification of dietic pattern itself cures many disorders. Also, Acharya Kashyapa devotes an entire chapter for Bhojya Vidhi Vikalpa. Growth is the global indicator of children's wellbeing; for this, sufficient intake of Ahara is essential. For adequate and appropriate growth, nutrition is the most critical factor. While good nutrition is vital throughout childhood, it is crucial during the first five years of a child's life, particularly in the first 2-3 years when rapid growth occurs and when the child is entirely dependent on the mother and the family for food. According to WHO and UNICEF estimates, 60% of child deaths are due to malnutrition only. Also, 1 in 3 of the world's malnourished children lives in India. Thus, children and adolescents should consume a balanced diet to ensure proper growth and development and stay healthy and disease-free.

Keywords: Bala poshana, Stanya, Annaprashana, Nutrition, Breast milk, Complementary feeds.

INTRODUCTION

Nutrition, also called nourishment, is the provision, to cells and organisms, of the materials necessary in the form of food to support life. All nutrition aims to give our body the nourishment and energy required. Breast milk is the best food that provides maximum nourishment to the baby. Infants who had not taken breastfed are associated with an increased incidence of infectious morbidity, including otitis media, pneumonia and gastroenteritis, elevated risks of childhood obesity, type 1 and type 2 diabetes, leukaemia sudden infant death syndrome.

An infant should be exclusively breastfed till six months of age. After six months of age, breast milk alone is not enough to make an infant grow well. Complementary feeding is started at six months of age while continuing breastfeeding. It refers to food that complements breastmilk and ensures that the child continues to have enough energy, protein and other nutrients to grow normally. It should be started with small amounts as 1-2 teaspoons, and the quantity is increased gradually as the child gets older and starts to accept food better. Breastfeeding is encouraged up to two years of age in addition to regular food. An average healthy breastfed infant needs complementary food 2-3 times per day at 6-8 months of age and 3-4 times per day at 9-24 months. For children 12-24 months of age, additional nutritious snacks such as a piece of fruit should also be offered 1-2 times per day. Avoid feeding bottles, and as the child grows older, he should be shifted to more appropriate foods suitable for his age¹.

According to Acharya Kashyapa, Ahara is considered as Mahabeshajam. Because Ahara, when taken as per rules and regulations by considering the season, day, geographical, racial, the digestive capacity of the individual, will naturally maintain the health. Same Ahara, when taken in an unjustified method (without following rules and regulations), acts as a poison. Children should be fed whenever they feel hungry. This prevents

ill-health or developmental retardation, which Adhyasana or Anasana may cause.

Nourishment Process as per Ayurveda

- The food taken gets digested by the Agni in the stomach.
- It gets converted into a nourishing part, i.e., Sara, and part to be expelled, i.e., Mala.
- Further nourishing parts gets absorbed.
- It gets metabolized into different body tissues called Dhatus in the presence of Dhatwagni.
- During the process, metabolic wastes are produced and expelled from the body.
- The excellence of dhatu provides bala, i.e., strength and immunity.
- This helps in the promotion of health and alleviation of diseases.

Stanya

From the definition of Kaumarabhritya, Acharya Sushruta² has given more importance to Stanya. He mentioned Ksheera Dosha Samshodana Kriya of Dhatri/ mother and Dushta Stanyaja disorder. Bhela has included Stanya amongst the Pranayatana. Stanya is the essential collection of Rasadhātu in the Stana after filtration from the body. It is produced from Ahara rasa and is considered as Upadhātu of Rasadhātu³. Thus, when Jatharagni and Rasa Dhatwagni are normal, proper Rasa dhātu and its by-products, i.e., Upadhātu (Stanya), are formed. The semen is ejaculated by thought, sight or touch of women or coitus with her, similarly milk is ejected by Smarana, Darsana or Sparsana of child and his physical contact. For proper flow of Stanya, Nirantara Sneha for a child is mainly responsible⁴. After delivery on the 3rd and 4th day, Dhamani's or Sira's situated in Hridaya get dilated and initiate milk ejection.

Table 1: Basic physical character of Stanya

| | |
|---------|----------------------------|
| Volume | 2 Anjali ⁵ |
| Varna | Shankavabasa, Panduram |
| Rasam | Madhuram, Kasahaya anurasa |
| Guna | Madhugandhi |
| Veerya | Sheetam |
| Vipakam | Madhuram |
| Karma | Vatapittakapham |

Composition of breast milk

The composition of breast milk varies as per stages of lactation, gestational age of the body, during the phase of feeding and species.

1. **Colostrum** (Stanya Piyusham) – The milk is secreted in small quantities (~10-15 ml/day) during the first three days after delivery. It is yellow, thick, low in fat and carbohydrate contents, but rich in fat-soluble vitamins, proteins and minerals (Na, K, Cl) contain more antibodies and WBC. It provides 67 Kcal/dl. Colostrum is, therefore, to be fed.
2. **Transitional milk** – Colostrum is replaced by transitional milk on the 4th day and secretes for two weeks. The protein and immunoglobulin decrease while the sugar and fat increase.
3. **Mature milk** – It follows transitional milk. It is relatively watery but contains all the nutrients essential for optimal growth of the baby and secretes about 600-800 ml of milk per day. It provides ~ 75 Kcal/day.
4. **Preterm milk** is the mother's milk who delivers before 37 weeks. It has a higher concentration of protein, sodium, iron, immunoglobulins and calories as per the requirements of a preterm baby.
5. **Foremilk** is the milk secreted at the start of feed and is rich in proteins, sugar, vitamins, minerals, and water that quenches the baby's thirst.
6. **Hind milk** comes later towards the end of the feed and is rich in fat, providing more energy and a sense of satiety.

For optimum growth, the baby needs both foremilk and hindmilk. Therefore, the baby should be allowed to empty the breast before switching over to the other.

Stanya Sampat

Kashyapa, without mentioning any physical character, says that pure milk is that which provides unobstructed Bala (easy and sound growth of strength), Anga (different body parts), Ayu (longevity), Aroga (good health) and Shishu datryoranapatti (doesn't cause any trouble to the child)⁸.

According to Acharya Charaka, ideal milk must have standard color, odor, taste and touch, dissolved absolutely in water because of its watery nature. Perfect or pure milk provides nourishment and disease-free, i.e., healthy state to the child⁹.

Stanyapaana Vidhi (Method of breastmilk feeding)

Breastfeeding is a coordinated skillful act between the mother and the baby. So, special care has to be taken not only to maintain the quality of Stanya but also in the feeding technique. Hence, our Acharyas clearly explain the following principles while feeding

the baby. According to Acharya Sushruta, on an auspicious date, the child should be bathed from the head and clothed with new garments and made to sit towards North or facing upwards, over the wet nurse or Dhatri lap who is seated facing eastwards or forwards. Dhatri, after washing the breasts and expressing out a little quantity of milk, should start Stanyapaana with enchanting the Mantra¹⁰.

Breastfeeding position

The baby may be breastfed in several different positions concerning the mother: across her chest and abdomen, i.e., 'front hold' or 'cradle position'; under her arm or 'underarm position' or alongside her body, i.e. 'lying down position'. 'Underarm position' is also known as the 'footy hold' or twin hold' and is helpful to feed twins together in this position. The 'lying down' position is particularly good for mothers who have had caesareans.

Stanyaabhava Pathya Vyavastha

Immediate requirement of the baby after birth is feeding. But the absence of a mother either due to death or pathological problems related to breastfeeding leads to feeding the baby other alternative sources. In such situations providing human milk, which is species-specific instead of animal milk, was thought long back by Acharyas. Although animal milk is readily available, Ayurveda emphasizes the wet nurse as an immediate next feeding choice in the mother's absence.

If breastmilk is insufficient, the child may be given wet nurse¹¹. This may be since the baby should be supplemented with food and be provided with affectionate, experienced and nurturing support.

In breast milk deficiency, the child may be given Ajaksheera or goat's milk & Goksheera or cow's milk because it is Satmya to the child¹². In Ashtanga Hridaya, the same measures have been shown in the absence of breastmilk, but it should be processed with drugs of Hrsva Panchamoola or with two Sthira¹³. Only in the absence of wet nurse milk or if the baby cannot suck wet nurse milk animal milk has been considered the choice. Bhavaprakasha says that while using animal milk, it should be diluted with half portion of water

Milk from the breast milk bank can be used. A human milk bank is a service that collects, screens, processes and distributes human milk donated by nursing mothers who are not biologically related to the recipient infant. The purpose of breast milk banking is to provide a continuous supply of human milk to sick and preterm babies, which reduces infection rates in hospitalized babies and also frequent breast milk expression of the mother whose babies are unable to suckle would help in maintaining lactation.

Contraindications of breastfeeding

Intake of milk of pregnant mother or dhatri lead to the onset of Parigarbhika roga¹⁴. The use of many kinds of breastmilk or, in other words lactating women is frequently changed, which leads to the commencement of Asatmya Vyadhi¹⁵. If the breast is not slightly squeezed or milk is not drained, then the breast becomes tense due to over-accumulation of milk. If a child sucks these tense breasts, his srotas get filled, or milk goes to the abnormal passage and produces Kasa, Shwasa and Vami¹⁶. Stanya of Kshuditha, Vichetasa, Garbini, Virudhaahara sevitha should not be given to Shishu as they produce diseases to child¹⁷. Stanya should be given to the child until the ingested medicine is digested or fully metabolized¹⁸. During acute febrile maternal illness and

development of breast abscess, the breastfeeding should be withheld temporarily, and breast milk expressed manually and discarded. The mother receiving antithyroid drugs and anticancer agents should not breastfeed feed baby.

Artificial feeding

Artificial feeding of the baby is required if the mother cannot breastfeed due to failure of lactation or by contraindications. However, it should be economical and free from bacterial contamination. The different types of milk used are fresh liquid milk (cow's or goat's milk) and powdered/ formula milk (cow milk protein-based formula, soya-based formulas and goat's milk formula).

Specific feeding schedule

On the first day, the baby should be made to lick the mixture of Ananta mixed with Madhu and Sarpi three times a day by chanting Mantra. The baby should be given ghee prepared with Lakshmana on the second and third days. Afterwards, the baby is prevented from sucking the breast should be made to lick one Paanitala of Navaneetha followed by drinking of Stanya at two times of the day¹⁹.

The above schedule is better applicable to a preterm, low birth weight baby. Rooting and sucking reflexes will be gradually enhanced by licking, and licking the drugs acts as nutritive sucking. Medications used are nutritionally rich and prevent the baby from hypoglycemia till the initiation of breastfeeding. They

also have Medhya property. Practically, this is done to test for coordination of reflexes to initiate feeding as early as possible.

Markers of ideal and insufficient nutrition

Acharya Kashyapa explains the features of ideal food as well as insufficient nutrition. If one produces happiness, will power, intellect, enthusiasm, well built, proper development, good sound, energetic, good looking and good immune system due to sufficient nutrition²⁰. If spirit, complexion, voice and vision are reduced, emaciation, fatigue, abnormalities in voice, pain in the cardiac region and unpleasant facies due to insufficient nutrition²¹. One can understand baby is getting sufficient breast milk by assessing proper weight gain, urine output, linear growth and sleep.

Stanya dosha

Even though Stanya provides nutritional and psychological satisfaction to the infant, its abnormality causes disease and morbidity to the infant. Stanya dosha, or abnormality of breast milk, is a unique concept in Ayurveda, described by various Acharyas. Stanya dushti is a significant concern as it affects the growth and development of infants.

It is of two types, i.e. Stanya Pramana dosha (Quantitative abnormality of breast milk) and Stanya Guna dosha (Qualitative abnormality of breast milk). Stanya Pramana dosha is further of two types, Stanya Kshaya and Stanya vridhhi, and Stanya Guna Dosha is Stanya dushti itself.

Table 2: Types of Stanya Dushti as per various Acharyas

| Samhita | Dosha | Types |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Charaka Chikitsa ²² | Vataja | Virasa, Phensanghata Rukshata |
| | Pittaja | Vivarnata, Daurgandhya |
| | Kaphaja | Atisnigdha, Pichhila, Guruta |
| Harita Samhita | Vataja | Alpashirata |
| | Pittaja | Ushnashirata, Amlashirata |
| | Kaphaja | Ghanashirata, Ksharshirata |
| Ashtanga Hridaya | Vataja | |
| | Pittaja | |
| | Kaphaja | |
| | Sannipataja | |

Table 3: Diseases Caused by Various Stanyadushti by Charaka Samhita

| Dosha | Type of Stanyadushti | Diseases caused by Dushti |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Vataja | Virasata | Durbalata, Vridhi |
| | Phensanghata | Swara ksheenata, Mala Mutra Vayu Avarodha, Shirashula, Peenasa |
| | Rukshata | Balahani |
| Pittaja | Vaivarnya | Swedaadhikya, Trishna, Dravamalapravrutti, Shareera Sparshoushna |
| | Daurgandhya | Pandu, Kamala |
| Kaphaja | Snigdha | Chardi, Lalasrava, Kasa, Shwasa, Tamaka shwasa |
| | Pichhila | Mukha, Netrapradeshishotha |
| | Guru | Hdroga |

Table 4: Diseases caused by various Stanyadushti by other Samhita's

| Samhita | Stanyadushti | Diseases |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Harita | Ghana Ksheera | Utpullika |
| Ashtanga Samgraha | Tridosha Dushta | Ksheeralasaka |
| Kashyapa | Katu, Tikta Rasa | Shakuni Graha |
| | Sannipataja Dosha | Skanda, Shashti Graha |
| | Swadu, Katu Rasa | Putana Graha |

Dugdha paana samskara

This is a special Samskara, which is mentioned in Hindu religious books. The baby is fed for the first time with external milk (other than the breast milk) after worshipping Kula Devata and a Brahmana. The baby will be given animal milk through a conch shell. This is performed during the 1st month of life. This acts like starting process of slow weaning. This may be a test trial method to see "Milk allergies" in a growing child and also helps to enhance the calorific requirements of baby²³.

Phalaprashana

It is a particular procedure explained in Kaumarabhritya. Initially, the baby was given fruit juices followed by solid food prepared with milk as the base. Phalaprashana and Annaprashana are the two important Samskaras explained in Ayurveda which explains the concept of complementary feeds in Ayurveda. Only Kashyapa explains Phalaprashana before introducing solid foods as the baby should slowly get practised to tolerate and digest lighter food material first, later followed by heavy food.

Among the fruit juices are considered ideal. Besides, fruits are the best sources of vitamin C and fibrous material. The baby accustomed to Madhura rasa alone will have trouble adjusting with Rasas like Katu, Tikta etc. At this stage, Phalaprashana helps the baby to adapt with other Rasas through Madhura Amla Rasas of fruits. Kashyapa considers dental eruption as the endpoint of Phalaprashana. Initially, central incisors erupt for 6-7 months. Eruption of teeth is indicative of GIT maturity to digest, absorb and assimilate nutrients. The current concept of introduction of solid food at six months of age is strictly based on the nutritional requirements of the baby²⁴.

Annaprashana

Annaprashana introduces solid food to the baby. It should be done only after teeth eruption, probably after 8-10 months. This Samskara will be conducted on the 10th month on an auspicious day on Prajapati Nakshatra, after worshipping the Deva, Dwija etc., followed by Swasti Vachana and Mangalacharana. A square portion is marked and smeared with Gomaya and then different food substances like Mamsa, Payasa, and Dadhi etc., importance should be kept and will be covered by Darbha and Gandha mala. Flowers like Jatipushpa should be spread on the floor. Then Mamsa of Lava, Tittira and Charanayudha should be kept along with different tasty dishes. Then physician should sit facing the eastern direction.

Meanwhile, after taking a bath, the child gets decorated with cloth and ornaments after performing protective measures to sit facing west. Then Agni prajwalana should be done, then Anna and other dishes are offered to Agni along with chanting of mantras. After giving offerings to Agni, leftover material should be taken, squeezed, or mashed with the thumb and given to the child 3-5 times. After Anna, Jalapaana should be done.

This should be started in the 10th month, and further, by observing tolerance and digestive capacity of the child, different types of solid foods are introduced gradually. By the 12th month, the baby should be accustomed to family food. The present medical recommendation is that the child is given all food materials that family members eat by one year.

Food for Annaprashana:

1. Rice preparations like Shali, especially Shashtika shali should be taken.

2. Paddy should be fried with the husk intact, which helps restore micronutrients and vitamins. Later, husk should be removed, and rice should be powdered. Powdered rice can be mixed with different liquids like milk added with oil and salt and given to the baby. This acts as a nourishing food.
3. In Pitta Prakriti infants: Mrdvika with honey and butter oil always be given with diet.
4. In Vata Prakriti infants: a Diet with a good quantity of Matulunga juice and salt should be given.

As per Kashyapa,

1. Up to 6th month – Breastfeeding with the gradual introduction of fruit juices
2. 6-10th month – Phalaprashana with the gradual introduction of solid foods and breastfeeding.
3. 10-12th month – Annaprashana with different varieties of solid foods, along with fruit juices and breast milk
4. 12th month onwards – Different foods that a child likes, and family members eat.
5. Sushruta²⁵ and Vagbhata²⁶ say – Anna Prashana in the 6th month itself.

Lehana

Lehana is one of the unique concepts of Kaumarabhritya. When given to the baby for licking, any substance is called Lehana. Kashyapa Sutrasthana 18th chapter explains Lehana, and also, even by Sushruta, Vagbhata and Dalhana explained it. Usually, Leha or Avaleha is semisolid or sticky. It is processed with honey, sugar and other substances to make it palatable. Hence, Lehana may be such a procedure where non-palatable high calorific substances essential for the body growth and development are made palatable and administered. Lehana is restricted for physical and mental health and acts as a supplementary food. It has been aimed to stimulate and strengthen the body's immunity. This also looks like an essential routine procedure for growing children, which smoothen weaning with a smooth, comfortable transfer to the external food.

DISCUSSION

Breast milk is ideal for normal babies, both term and preterm babies. Expressed breast milk (EBM) is suitable for preterm babies as they should be fed with un-boiled milk obtained from their mothers. Besides biochemical advantages, human milk protects against infections, decrease the risk of necrotizing enterocolitis retinopathy of prematurity and strengthens mother-infant bonding. Skin-to-skin has been shown to have statistically significant and positive effects on breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity. Most babies in NICU need supplementation of their EBM feedings with a few feeds of "premature baby formula", which is credited to provide additional calories, proteins and nutrients.

Dugdhapana in the first month, Phala Prashana in the 6th month, and Anna Prashana in the 10th month suggest slow weaning from breast milk with gradually introducing the family food system. Tolerance, digestive capacity, gastric upset, Satmyata have been kept in mind throughout the process. As infancy proceeds, the calorific requirement of the baby increases due to increased activity level and rapid growth. So, providing a higher calorific supply, along with breast milk, is essential.

Nutrition in early life has important implications for an infant's later life, such as neurodevelopmental outcomes, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and allergies. Adequacy of nutrition is crucial to enhance linear growth neuromotor development and

ensure optimal functioning of various body organs. A good guide for children having an optimum quantity of food is their activity level and weight gain.

CONCLUSION

Stanya is the first choice in neonates, whether term or preterm. Feeding should be initiated as soon as possible after birth and should be given in appropriate manner to ensure adequate growth of the baby. In certain circumstances, formula feeding may be needed, should be well prepared and given in appropriate amount and concentrate on. Breastfeeding has been shown to reduce the risk of death due to diarrhea by 14 times, acute respiratory infections by four times and other infections by three times. Thus, infants are always advised to consume Stanya only, as it is homogenous, Satmya to the baby, suitable for the baby's growth and development of the baby and also it meets all nutritional needs of the baby and boosts host defenses of the newborn. Dugdhapana is one of the methods of initiation of supplementary feeding. Phalaprashana and Annaprashana show the knowledge of Ayurvedic Acharya regarding the introduction of weaning food to a growing infant. The Ksheerapa period is as per Ayurveda during the first year of life. This indicates that along with weaning food, breast milk should be continued till the completion of two years (Ksheera Annada Kala). According to Acharya Vagbhata, Priyala Majja Modaka is an ideal weaning food and other food that provides high levels of essential fatty acids. The administration of Lehana provides essential calorific nutrients macro-micronutrients to a growing child.

A healthy, nutritious diet is essential in children's growing and developing years. It helps build a strong foundation in the child regarding staying healthy and imbibing good eating habits right from childhood. Therefore, proper nutrition for children is important. They provide immunity against various infectious diseases, ensure adequate brain development and other vital organs, and improve a child's activity levels and cognitive functioning.

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