



EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF MENTAL STATES (MANSIK BHAVAS) ON LACTATION: REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

Breast milk stands as the foremost source of nutrition in every individual's early life. According to Ayurveda, Stanya is considered an Upadhatu of Rasa and is pivotal for the nourishment and development of infants. Ayurveda defines decreased breast milk or lactation insufficiency as Stanya Kshaya, primarily attributed to emotions like anger, grief, and excessive affection, alongside dietary influences. Psychological factors such as emotional stress, anxiety, and maternal health also significantly impact milk production, necessitating both psychological and medical interventions. Any disruption in Agni affects Ahara Rasa, leading to disturbances in Rasa Dhatu, thereby affecting Stanya. Psychological aspects play a crucial role in the proper formation of Ahara Rasa. The significance of Manasika Bhavas lies in their advocacy of Soumanasya as a primary treatment for Ksheerajanana. This paper explores the correlation between psychological well-being and lactation outcomes, drawing on both contemporary psychological research and traditional Ayurvedic principles. Psychological stress, anxiety, depression, and maternal bonding are examined as key factors affecting

hormonal balance and neuroendocrine pathways involved in lactation. Understanding these influences is crucial for holistic approaches to maternal health and breastfeeding support. The integration of psychological interventions alongside conventional medical treatments could enhance maternal lactation success rates and overall maternal-infant health outcomes. Thus, managing Stanya Kshaya requires thorough consideration of both psychological factors and dietary practices.

Keywords:

Ayurveda, Stanya, Stanyakshaya, Breast milk, Lactation insufficiency, psychological factor

Introduction

Lactation is a complex physiological process influenced by hormonal, nutritional, and psychological factors. While the biological mechanisms of milk production are well understood, increasing attention is being given to the role of mental and emotional health in successful breastfeeding. In this context, the concept of mansik bhavas—which refers to an individual's mental states, emotions, and psychological disposition—holds significant importance.

Stanya is an Upadhatu of Rasa Dhatu, derived from the sweet essence of digested food through the mother's Jatharagni.[1,2,3] Ayurveda comprehensively addresses the qualities of Stanya, the lactating mother's attributes, and the numerous benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and child. Soumnasya (Happiness) has been considered as major factor for Stanya Pravriti,[4] Stanyakshaya is primarily caused by the mother's psychosomatic issues and her diet. Psychological factors such as Krodha (anger), Shoka (grief), Bhaya (fear), Irshya (jealousy), and decreased affection (Avatsalyatwa) are identified as contributors to Stanyakshaya, along with the mother's dietary and physiological conditions.[5]

Traditional systems of medicine, particularly Ayurveda, emphasize the close relationship between the mind and body. According to this perspective, a mother's mental state can directly influence bodily functions, including lactation. Positive mental states such as calmness, confidence, and emotional stability are believed to promote effective milk production and flow, whereas negative emotions like stress, anxiety, fear, and depression may adversely affect the process.

Modern scientific evidence also supports this connection, highlighting the role of stress hormones in inhibiting the release of prolactin and oxytocin, which are essential for milk synthesis and ejection. Thus, both classical and contemporary views underline the importance of psychological well-being during the lactation period. This review article aims to explore the influence of mansik bhavas on lactation, integrating traditional Ayurvedic concepts with modern scientific understanding, and emphasizing the need for holistic maternal care.

Aims and objectives-

Aim

To explore the influence of mansik bhavas (mental states) on lactation and understand their role in breast milk production and breastfeeding outcomes

Objectives-

To understand Stanya Kshaya and its relation to Manasika Bhavas in Ayurveda.

- To review modern research on the impact of psychological factors on lactation.

Materials and Methods

Classical Ayurvedic texts and relevant modern literature were reviewed to study Stanya, Stanya Kshaya, and their association with psychological factors.

Methodology

A descriptive review approach was used to analyze Stanya Kshaya, its link with Manasika Bhavas, and its Ayurvedic management.

Review-

In Ayurveda, Stanya (breast milk) holds a prominent position, often referred to synonymously as 'Piyusha'. It is regarded as Jivana Amsha, signifying its crucial role as the primary source of nutrition for infants.[6] This designation is attributed to its inherent Satmyatva, which denotes its compatibility with the infant's constitution.

Its importance extends beyond physical nourishment, fostering a profound emotional bond between mother and child. Stanya is considered the essence of Rasadhatu, which is derived from digested food circulating throughout the body.[7] It accumulates in the breasts and is rich in nutrients derived from the Prasada Bhaga of Ahara Rasa (nutrient plasma). This composition makes it the ideal source of nourishment for the child. Therefore, Stanya Kshaya (decreased breast milk production) is closely linked with Rasadhatu Kshaya (depletion of bodily tissues).

The food ingested by the mother travels through the Sira (channels) of the chest (esophagus), where it mixes with Pitta (digestive enzymes). It then reaches the Jathara (stomach) where it is metabolized by Jatharagni (digestive fire). Further metabolism by Pitta occurs, and the nutrients reach the Siras (channels) of the breasts, where milk is formed and eventually discharged.[8] The ejection of milk is triggered by the thought, sight, or touch of the child, as well as the physical contact during suckling.[9] Uninterrupted affection for the child is crucial for ensuring the proper flow of milk.

After delivery, there is a rapid decrease in levels of human placental lactogen, estrogen, and progesterone. Progesterone, known for inhibiting prolactin, ceases its action in the absence of high levels, thereby allowing milk secretion to commence. This decline is most effective when accompanied by lactogenic hormones like prolactin, insulin, and cortisol, leading to full secretory activation typically occurring between 30 and 72 hours postpartum. Consequently, mothers often experience breast fullness by the second or third day after delivery.[10] While prolactin, oxytocin, glucocorticoids, and insulin are the primary hormones involved in lactogenesis and milk ejection, additional hormones such as leptin and opiates also play roles in stimulating these processes.[11]

Psychological Factors (Manasika Bhavas) and Their Influence

In Ayurveda, Manasika Bhavas (mental and emotional states) significantly influence bodily functions, including Stanya (breast milk). The quality and quantity of lactation are affected by the balance of the mind (Satva).

Positive Manasika Bhavas

- Harsha (happiness)
- Preeti (love/affection)
- Chitta Prasannata (mental calmness)

These promote proper lactation by:

- Supporting hormonal balance
- Enhancing Stanya production
- Improving mother–infant bonding

Negative Manasika Bhavas

- Shoka (grief)
- Bhaya (fear)
- Krodha (anger)
- Chinta (worry/stress)

These can:

- Vitiate Doshas (especially Vata and Pitta)
- Lead to Stanya Kshaya (reduced milk)
- Disturb milk secretion and flow

Mechanism (Ayurvedic View)

Disturbed Manasika Bhavas affect the Manovaha Srotas (channels of the mind), which in turn influence Stanyavaha Srotas (channels responsible for breast milk). This leads to impaired formation and secretion of Stanya.

Integrative Approach: Diet, Lifestyle, and Psychological Factors

An integrative approach combining diet (Ahara), lifestyle (Vihara), and mental well-being (Manasika Bhavas) is essential for maintaining optimal lactation and preventing Stanya Kshaya.

Dietary Factors (Ahara)

A nourishing and balanced diet plays a vital role in supporting Stanya production. Ayurveda recommends:

- Stanyajanana Ahara (galactagogue foods) such as milk, ghee, Shatavari, fennel, and cumin
- Warm, unctuous, and easily digestible foods
- Adequate hydration
- Avoidance of dry, spicy, and processed foods that may vitiate Vata and Pitta

Proper nutrition enhances the quality and quantity of breast milk.

Lifestyle Factors (Vihara)

Healthy lifestyle practices help maintain hormonal balance and mental stability:

- Adequate rest and sleep
- Regular daily routine (Dinacharya)
- Gentle activities like yoga and meditation
- Avoidance of overexertion and stress

Such practices support both physical recovery and effective lactation.

Psychological Well-being (Manasika Bhavas)

A calm and positive mental state is crucial:

- Emotional support from family
- Stress management through relaxation techniques

- Encouraging mother–infant bonding

Positive Bhavas promote proper secretion of lactation hormones, while negative emotions may lead to Stanya Kshaya.

Integrative Perspective

The combined effect of proper diet, balanced lifestyle, and stable mental health creates an optimal internal environment for lactation. Ayurveda emphasizes that harmony between body and mind is essential for healthy Stanya production.

Discussion-

The causes of Stanyanasha (loss of breast milk) and Stanya Kshaya (decreased breast milk) are extensively documented by ancient Ayurvedic scholars. They attribute these conditions to various factors, prominently including Langhana (excessive fasting or dieting), Rukshannapana (consumption of dry or rough foods), Karshana (emaciation), Atyanta Apatarpana (excessive depletion), Shodhana Atiyoga (excessive detoxification), as well as psychological factors such as Krodha (anger), Bhaya (fear), Shoka (grief), Kama (desire), and Avatsalyatwa (excessive love or attachment).[12,13] As a consequence, imbalance in Vata, Pitta, and Kapha doshas occurs, leading to depletion of the Rasa Dhatu. This depletion subsequently affects the Upadhatu, particularly Stanya (breast milk).[14] Therefore, Stanya Kshaya is influenced by both psychological factors and the mother's dietary regimen

In Ayurveda, the Stana (breast) is revered as the Moola (root) of organs involved in the formation and nourishment of gametes (Shukravaha Srotas). This designation stems from the influence of gonadal hormones on breast tissues.[15] The growth and development of the breast are primarily under the influence of estrogen and progesterone, crucial hormones that regulate tissue development. Conversely, the process of milk formation and milk ejection is orchestrated by prolactin and oxytocin.

Lactogenesis (milk formation) and milk ejection begin approximately three to four days after delivery, triggered by the dilation of Dhamani (blood vessels) in the Hridaya (cardiac region).

This delay may be attributed to elevated levels of progesterone and estrogen, which render breast tissue less responsive to prolactin initially. As these hormone levels naturally decrease after delivery, the inhibitory effect is lifted, allowing for milk synthesis to commence. The dilation of blood vessels in the cardiac region likely signifies the filling of milk in the lactating tubules of the mammary glands.

Psychological factors such as anger, grief, fear, and a lack of affection for the child are cited as significant causes of Stanya Kshaya (lactation insufficiency). Additionally, worries, excessive anxiety, stressful labor, maternal insecurities, and stress stemming from a lack of support or motivation from the spouse and family can hinder oxytocin secretion, thereby impeding milk ejection.[16]

Conclusion

Breastfeeding is recognized as optimal feeding choice for infants. Understanding psychological factors influencing Stanya Kshaya highlights importance of holistic care and support for breastfeeding mothers. Addressing stress, anxiety, depression, and emotional well-being through integrated approaches can greatly impact milk production and maternal health outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to develop effective strategies that garner interest of policymakers and healthcare providers in identifying specific demographic and psychological traits in mothers that can enhance breastfeeding success. Implementing psychological screening during pregnancy and integrating mental health services into postpartum care are strongly recommended practices. Thus, holistic approach empowers healthcare providers to support mothers comprehensively, enabling them to navigate challenges and enjoy fulfilling breastfeeding experiences.

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