



## *Stanyakshaya* - An Ayurvedic Insight

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**Abstract:** *Stanyakshaya*, a term from *Ayurvedic* literature, refers to the deficiency or depletion of breast milk in lactating mothers. It is a condition of significant concern in postnatal care, as adequate breast milk is essential for neonatal nutrition, immunity, and growth. *Ayurveda* attributes *Stanyakshaya* to factors such as improper diet (*Ahara*), psychological stress (*Manasika Bhava*), systemic diseases, and *mandaagni* (digestive fire), leading to impaired *Rasa Dhatu*, which is the precursor to *Stanya* (breast milk). From a modern medical perspective, this condition closely correlates with hypogalactia, or insufficient lactation. Modern causes include hormonal imbalances (such as low prolactin or oxytocin levels), maternal malnutrition, stress, postpartum complications, and improper breastfeeding techniques. Hypogalactia can lead to neonatal complications like failure to thrive, dehydration, and increased risk of infections.

*Ayurveda chikitsa* focuses more on *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle and psychological factors) and *Aushadhi* (oral medication) like using *Stanyajanana* (galactagogue) drugs. Modern treatment also includes nutritional counseling, stress reduction, hormonal evaluation, and support for effective breastfeeding practices. Integrative approaches combining *Ayurvedic* galactagogues with modern lactation support may offer a comprehensive and effective management strategy for *Stanya Kshaya*.

**Keywords:** *Stanyakshaya*, *Stanyajanana*, Hypoprolactenemia, *Dhatukshaya*.

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### *Concept of Stanyakshaya*

There is a possibility to decrease the mortality rate by 5% by the most effective intervention known to prevent new born and child deaths, which accounts for 13% of all fatalities in the developing world. This can be achieved by guaranteeing exclusive breast feeding for six months, as breast milk is the best meal for babies. Breastfeeding is highly regarded in *Ayurveda*, which lists several benefits of breastfeeding. Babies need the right nutrition, which is supplied by *Stanya* (breast milk), to grow and develop normally. Baby's best food is *stanya*, or human breast milk, as it is uniquely formulated for them and includes almost all of the bioactive components, vitamins, minerals, immunoglobulins, and water that they require. According to *Acharya Charaka*, human milk possesses of *Jeevaniya* (life-giving), *Bruhaniya* (nourishing), *Satmya* (easily palatable), and *Snehanam* (oleation). **KS Chavan (2021)**

Numerous scientific publications have detailed the benefits of breast milk, and it is imperative that infants begin their nutritional journey by nursing. In *Ayurvedic* texts, *stanya* is described as the *upadhatu* of *rasa*

*dhatu*. *Rasa* is first product from *ahararasa*, after digestion by *jatharaagni* and *dhatwagni*. The *rasa* essence that circulates throughout the body is gathered in *stanya* of *sadhyoprasuta*. **Meher et al. (2022)**

It is highly recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) that all newborns should be breastfed within one hour after birth. It protects infants against the harmful consequences of illnesses that causes morbidity and mortality. When it comes to a newborn's health, the simplest, most effective, cost-efficient, and potentially life-saving measure is exclusive breastfeeding.[1]

One term for *Stanya* is *Jeevanam*, and it is either the *Upadhatu* of *Rasa dhatu* or the result of *Rasagni's* action on *Rasadhatu*. The *Rasa* that a pregnant woman's food produces has three primary purposes, according to *Aacharya Charaka* and *Aacharya Kashyap* [2]: first, to nourish the mother's own body (*Swashariraposhana*), second, to generate breast milk (*Stanya*), and third, to nurture the unborn child (*Garbhaposhana*). According to *Ayurveda*, the process of milk production begins in the prenatal stage. **U Sharma (2022)**

### **Etiology and Pathophysiology**

When breastfeeding moms do not produce enough milk, the infant does not get enough nutrition, a condition known as *Sthanyakshaya* in *Ayurveda*. *Dosha* imbalances and nutritional deficits are the main causes.

### **Etiology (Nidana) of Sthanyakshaya**

Maternal factors, neonatal factors, and psychological issues are the three main categories into which the reasons of insufficient lactation fall:

#### **1. Maternal Causes**

##### **Vata-Pitta Aggravation:**

- Overconsumption of dry or spicy foods, prolonged periods of fasting, or dietary instability
- Excessive physical activity, tension, and nervousness
- Inadequate care after giving birth

##### **Nutritional Deficiency (Dhatu Kshaya):**

- Maternal malnutrition, anemia, or lack of water
- The consumption of insufficient amounts of galactagogue foods called *Stanya-janana dravyas*

##### **Hormonal Imbalances:**

- Abnormal production of prolactin and oxytocin
- Diseases of the thyroid that impact lactation

#### **2. Neonatal Causes**

- Babies born prematurely or with health problems often have a weak sucking reflex.
- Birth defects such as cleft lip and cleft palate

#### **3. Psychological and Environmental Causes**

- Stress
- Chemical poisoning or being in the presence of pollutants

## Pathophysiology (*Samprapti*) of *Sthanyakshaya*

### 1. Imbalance in *Doshas*:

- **Vata Dosh:** Dryness, tissue loss, and poor circulation are symptoms of Vata Dosh.
- **Pitta Dosh:** Reduces milk production and causes burning feelings due to high heat.
- **Kapha Dosh Deficiency:** When the *Kapha dosha* is lacking, the milk-producing unctuousness (*Snigdhatva*) is absent.

### 1. *Dhatu Kshaya* (Depletion of *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu*):

- The two primary components necessary for the production of breast milk are *Rasa Dhatu* and *Rakta Dhatu*.
- Loss of lactation occurs when these dhatus are inadequate or weak.

### 2. *Agnimandya* (Digestive Impairment):

- *Rasa dhatu* is impacted by poor digestion, also known as *Agnimandya*.
- A lack of sufficient *stanya* (milk) is caused by nutrients that are not absorbed completely.

### 3. Hormonal Dysregulation:

- Imbalance in prolactin and oxytocin secretion due to *Vata-Pitta* aggravation
- Stress-induced inhibition of the hypothalamic-pituitary axis

## Ayurvedic Diagnosis and Classification

Inadequate milk supply, or *Sthanyakshaya*, is a condition that can be caused by an imbalance of the *doshas*, a decrease in *Rasa Dhatu*, and poor postpartum care, according to *Ayurveda*. *Lakshanas*, or symptoms, *dosha* involvement, and *hetu*, or causal factors, are used to diagnose it. The diagnosis and categorization of this condition may be gleaned from *Ayurvedic* classics such as the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Kashyapa Samhita*.

### 1. Ayurvedic Diagnosis of *Sthanyakshaya* (*Roga Pariksha*)

#### A. *Pratyaksha Pariksha* (Direct Examination) – Clinical Symptoms

- Minimal or nonexistent milk production is known as *Alpa Stanya*.
- The loss of *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu* causes maternal weakness, also known as *Durbalatva*.
- *Vata-Pitta* vitiation causes *Rukshata*, which is dryness in the breasts.

#### B. *Ashtavidha Pariksha* (Eightfold Examination)

- (*Nadi Pariksha*): Checking the Heart Rate.
  - Pulse irregularity and weakness due to *Vata* dominance.
  - Quick and powerful heart rate is a result of *Pitta* dominance.
  - The presence of *Kapha* energy results in a deep, slow heartbeat.
- 1. *Mutra* (Urine Examination): Variations in urine frequency and color
- 2. *Mala* (Stool Examination): *Vata* aggravation can cause constipation or irregular bowel motions.
- 3. *Jihva* (Tongue Examination): *Rasa Dhatu* deficiency is indicated by dryness and roughness

#### C. *Dashavidha Pariksha* (Tenfold Examination) – Patient Constitution Analysis

1. *Prakriti*
  - **Vata Prakriti:** is more likely to experience *Sthanyakshaya* because of its dryness.
  - **Pitta prakriti:** linked to inflammation and a burning feeling.
  - **Kapha Prakriti:** is less impacted since it is nutritious.
2. Assessment of *doshik* imbalance in *Vikriti* (Pathological Condition).
3. Poor *Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu* in *Sara* suggest inadequate breastfeeding.
4. Lean bodily structures are more vulnerable, according to *Samhanana*.

## Classification of *Sthanyakshaya* in *Ayurveda*

*Sthanyakshaya* is categorized in *Ayurveda* according to the prevalence of *Dosha*, participation of *Dhatu*.

### A. Based on *Dosha* Involvement

#### 1. *Vataja Sthanyakshaya*.

**Indications:** Lack of moisture, insufficient milk production, lethargy, aches and pains in the joints, and difficulty passing stool.

**Reason:** Sudden and severe stress, together with an overabundance of physical exertion.

**Treatment:** *Vataghna* drugs, oleation treatments, and warm, nutritious meals.

#### 2. *Pittaja Sthanyakshaya*:

**Indications:** Some symptoms may include a burning feeling in the breasts, a change in milk color to yellow, and irritation.

**Reason:** Potential causes include consuming meals that are too spicy, illnesses, and hormone disturbances.

**Treatment:** *Pittaghna* drugs, such as *Yashtimadhu* and *Shatavari*, are used for management.

### B. Based on *Dhatu* Involvement

#### 1. *Rasa Dhatu Kshaya*:

- *Stanya* (milk) formation is inadequate due to inadequate *Ahara rasa*.
- Symptoms: Feeling parched, weak, lightheaded, and exhausted.
- Milk, ghee, and *Shatavari* are *Rasa*-enhancing foods that can be used as a treatment.

#### 2. *Rakta Dhatu Kshaya*:

- Problems in breastfeeding caused by anemia.
- Symptoms: Pale, lack of vitality, and a feeble pulse.
- *Ashwagandha*, iron-rich meals, and *Draksha* (raisins) used for treatment.

#### 3. *Mamsa and Meda Dhatu Kshaya*:

- Reduced milk production due to *Daurbalya*.
- Symptoms: *Glani*, *Daurbalya*
- A diet high in protein and nourishing herbs.

### Ayurvedic Management and Treatment

Inadequate production of breast milk, or *sthanakshaya*, is a health problem for mothers and their newborns. *Nidanaparivarjana*, *Aushadhi chikitsa*, *ahara* and *vihara* are all part of *Ayurveda's* treatment approach to addressing this ailment. *Rasa Dhatu*, or nutritional essence, is the primary target of the therapy, along with achieving a balance between the *Vata* and *Pitta doshas* and promoting breastfeeding.

#### 1. *Nidana Parivarjana* (Elimination of Causative Factors)

*Sthanyakshaya* treatment begins with *Nidana parivarjana*,

1. Avoid stress, long periods of fasting, and strenuous physical activity.
2. Maintaining healthy, well nutritive diet after giving birth.
3. Treating the root causes of health problems, such as anemia, gastrointestinal problem and hormone imbalances.

#### 2. *Pathya-Apathya* (Dietary Management)

*Pathya* (Recommended Foods) – *Stanya Janana Ahara*

In order to increase *Rasa Dhatu* and nourish the mother, several meals are known to function as galactagogues.

- Dairy Products and Milk—Breast milk is made even more luxurious with the addition of cow's milk, ghee, and curd.
- The lactogenic plant *shatavari*, whose scientific name is *Asparagus racemosus*, improves fertility and milk production (Ref: *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*).
- The cooling and nourishing herb *vidarikanda* (*Pueraria tuberosa*) improves lactation.

- For postpartum sustenance, try using *gondh*, also known as edible gum, in laddoos with almonds and ghee.

### Apathya (Foods to Avoid)

- Food that are in *amla, lavan, katu, rasa* might aggravate *Pitta* dosha.
- *Agnimandya* (poor digestion) caused by processed and junk food.
- The inability to produce enough milk due to an excess of caffeine and alcohol.

### 3. Herbal Management (*Stanya Vardhaka Dravyas*)

To naturally increase milk production, following drugs which serve as *Stanya Vardhaka (galactagogues)*:

- According to *Ashtanga Hridaya, Sutrasthana, the Rasayana* herb *shatavari* (*Asparagus racemosus*) encourages breastfeeding and maintains a balance between *Pitta* and *Vata*.
- *Yashtimadhu* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), is a herb that promotes a healthy hormonal balance and strengthens *Rasa Dhatu*.
- *jeeraka* (*Cuminum cyminum*), improves digestion and milk production.

### Herbal Formulations

- To improve nursing, try *Shatavari Ghrita*, a medicinal ghee infusion with *Shatavari*. The lactogenic qualities of garlic are present in *Lashunadi Ghrita*.
- *Jeeraka, Methi, and Yashtimadhu* are galactagogue plants used to make *Stanyajanana Kashaya*.
- *Pushyanuga Churna* is useful in *stanyakshaya* due to *rakta dhatu vikruti*.

### 4. Panchakarma Therapies for *Stanyakshaya*

- **Shirodhara:** The practice of balancing one's hormones and relieving stress might improve lactation.
- **Abhyanga:** also known as oil massage, uses either sesame oil or *Bala Taila* to increase blood flow and *RasaDhatu*.

### Discussion

*Rasa* is produced when *Jatharagni* and *Dhatwagni* digest *Aahara* (meal). Then, *Vyana Vayu* circulates the essence of *Rasa* through the body, and when it reaches the breast, it is called *Stanya*. The female digestive system, according to *Aacharya Harita*, begins in the *Sira* of the chest and ends in the *Jathara*. Here it undergoes digestion by *Jatharagni* (digestive fire), further processing by *Pitta*, transportation to *Siras* (the breast), and finally excretion. Physical contact with a baby, as well as mental and visual stimulation, can cause milk to be expelled (suckling). Uninterrupted love for the child is crucial for a smooth flow. As a result, the *Ayurvedic* classics propose a special food and way of life for puerperal women. Her strength, muscular bulk, and digestive power all decline. Along with *Snehapaana*, all of the *Acharyas* in *Sutikaparicharya* have recommended *Deepna Paachana Chikitsa*.

### Causes of *Stanyakshaya*

The common causes of *Stanyakshaya*, according to the *Ayurvedic* texts, are anger (*Krodha*), fear (*Bhaya*), stress (*Chinta*), lack of compassion for the kid, fasting, intense exercise, *shushka ahara*, malnutrition, overuse of purifying procedures, and re-pregnancy.

**Samprapti of *Stanyakshaya* (pathogenesis):** Due to the foetal growth, *Pravahana, vedana* (labor pains and bear down attempts), and the loss of *Rakta* and *Kleda* during *Prasava*, there is a general sense of emptiness in *Sutika*, which is known as *Dhatukshaya awastha*. This means that women are weaker in *mamsa, bala*, and *agni* (digestive force) during this phase. *Atyaapatarpana, rukshaanna, shoka, bhaya*, and *krodha* are all aspects of *Apathyasewana* that leads to this condition. Consequently, *RasaDhatukshaya* and *Upadhatukshaya* (*Stanyakshaya*) followed by *Vata-pradhana-tridosha-prakopa*.

Foetal Growth + *Pravahana* + *Vedana* + Loss of *Rakta* & *Kleda*

↓  
*Dhatukshaya Awastha*

↓  
↓ Weakened *Mamsa* ↓ Weakened *Bala* ↓ Weak *Agni*  
+ *Apathyasewana* (*Atyaapatarpana*, *Rukshaanna*, *Shoka*, *Bhaya*, *Krodha*)

↓  
*Rasa Dhatukshaya* & *Upadhatukshaya* (*Stanyakshaya*)

↓  
*Vata-Pradhana Tridosha Prakopa*

This article makes an effort to deduce the formulation's likely mechanism of action by analyzing its constituents and its *Ras*, *Guna*, *Veerya*, *Vipaka*, and *Karma*, both separately and in combination.

## Conclusion

When treating inadequate milk production, the primary and foremost line of treatment should be *Agnivardhan* chikitsa by *Deepan* and *Paachan* medicines. Modern women often lead sedentary lifestyles during their prenatal and postnatal periods, which increases their risk of *kledadhikya awastha* and *agnimandya*. Our first priority should be *samprapti-vighatan*, and only then should we pursue medications with galactogenous (*stanyajanan*) properties. Because the patient was exclusively treated according to the *Samprapti vighatan Chikitsa sutra*, a simple decoction proved to be a highly successful medicine in this circumstance. Since patients experience varying discomfort during the puerperal phase, treatment for *Stanyakshaya* must be individualized, using different drugs to address diverse *samprapti*. Both the mother and the infant experienced benefits from this therapy. Breast milk is the greatest gift a woman can give her kid. The best way to nourish a baby is with breast milk.

In our clinical practice, *Stanya Kshaya* is the most common problem. The four primary causes of this situation are, *Agni Mandhyata* (*Jatharagni* and *Rasdhavagnimandhyata*), *Stanyavaha srotoavrodha*, and *Maansikabhava* (*shok-bhaya* - *avaatsalya*). The infant's overall development and growth might be affected by *stanyakshaya*, which can lead to malnutrition. Lactating moms can be securely and efficiently managed by *Ayurveda*, which takes into account both their mental and physical aspects. In addition to treating lactational insufficiency, healthy nursing mother can use *Stanyavardhaka* and *Stanyajanaka* drugs, particularly in *sutikaavastha*, to boost breast milk production.

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