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Rafiq Uddin Hasan
Lecturer, Department of Rasashastra and Pharmacy, Government Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Sylhet, Bangladesh

Corresponding Author:
Rafiq Uddin Hasan
Lecturer, Department of Rasashastra and Pharmacy, Government Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Sylhet, Bangladesh

A clinical review of pediatric disorders arising from maternal *Ajeerna* during lactation period

Rafiq Uddin Hasan

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Abstract
Background: Lactation is a critical period during which the infant is entirely dependent on maternal breast milk for nutrition, immunity, and developmental cues. Ayurveda posits that maternal digestive health (*Agni*) during this period profoundly influences breast milk quality (*Stanya*), and disturbances such as *Ajeerna* (indigestion) may result in *Dushta Stanya* (vitiated milk), leading to pediatric disorders. Despite classical emphasis, this maternal-infant digestive link remains underexplored in modern clinical frameworks.
Objective: This review aims to investigate the clinical relevance of maternal *Ajeerna* during lactation in contributing to early childhood disorders, integrating classical Ayurvedic principles with contemporary biomedical research and observational evidence.
Methods: A narrative review of Ayurvedic texts (*Charaka Samhita, Kashyapa Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya*) was conducted alongside analysis of modern studies on maternal gut health, breast milk composition, and neonatal outcomes. Additionally, a six-month observational study involving 40 mother-infant dyads was evaluated to assess clinical correlations between maternal indigestion and pediatric symptoms.
Results: Classical Ayurvedic literature identifies *Ajeerna* as a key cause of *Stanya Dushti*, leading to symptoms such as infantile colic, diarrhea, skin disorders, and respiratory congestion. Modern research corroborates these findings, indicating that maternal dysbiosis and inflammation can alter breast milk composition, thereby affecting the infant's immune and gastrointestinal development. In the observational study, infants showed marked improvement in colic, sleep quality, and digestion after maternal digestive interventions, without direct treatment to the child.
Conclusion: Maternal *Ajeerna* during lactation emerges as a clinically significant factor in pediatric health, validating the Ayurvedic approach of maternal-centered pediatric care. Integrating maternal digestive assessment into postnatal and pediatric practice offers a preventive, non-invasive, and effective strategy for managing early childhood disorders. These findings advocate for renewed attention to maternal digestion in both clinical research and healthcare policy.

Keywords: *Ajeerna*, Dushta Stanya, Ayurveda, maternal digestion, breast milk quality, pediatric disorders, lactation, infant colic, Agni, Sutika Paricharya

1. Introduction
The health and nutrition of a lactating mother have a direct and profound impact on the infant's development and well-being. Among the various factors influencing neonatal health, maternal digestive health especially during lactation is often overlooked in both conventional and traditional medicine. In the Ayurvedic context, the concept of *Ajeerna* (indigestion or impaired digestion) plays a significant role in systemic imbalances that may extend beyond the mother and influence the breastfed infant. This review explores the clinical correlations and pathophysiological mechanisms underlying pediatric disorders arising from maternal *Ajeerna* during the lactation period.
Lactation is a critical period wherein the infant is solely dependent on breast milk for nutrition, immune support, and metabolic development. Ayurveda emphasizes that breast milk (*Stanya*) is not just a nutrient fluid but a *Snehapradhana Rasa Dhatu Upadhatu*-a secondary tissue derived from the mother's nutrition and *Agni* (digestive fire) status. Thus, any derangement in the maternal digestive process (*Jatharagni*) has a potential to vitiate the quality of breast milk, leading to disorders in the child such as *Vātavyādhi*, *Kasa*, *Ajirna*, *Balashosha*, and *Atisara* (Kashyapa Samhita, Sutrasthana).

Modern pediatrics has observed unexplained infantile colic, gastrointestinal upsets, feeding disorders, allergic responses, and even growth retardation in neonates whose mothers present subclinical or symptomatic digestive distress. Despite clinical interventions, a significant percentage of these disorders remain idiopathic, pointing toward the need for an integrative framework that recognizes maternal health holistically.

Recent research in gastrointestinal microbiota, epigenetic modulation via breast milk, and maternal-infant health axis validates the traditional perspective. For instance, studies have demonstrated that maternal dysbiosis or inflammation can alter the immunomodulatory profile of breast milk, increasing the risk for pediatric atopic diseases and gut dysregulation (Pannaraj *et al*., 2017; Andreas *et al*., 2015) [5, 4].

This paper seeks to provide a comprehensive clinical review of pediatric conditions linked to maternal indigestion during lactation, integrating Ayurvedic pathophysiology with contemporary biomedical insights. Key objectives include:

- Defining *Ajeerna* in lactating mothers from Ayurvedic and modern perspectives
- Examining the physiological transmission of doshic imbalance through breast milk
- Identifying pediatric disorders commonly observed due to impaired maternal digestion
- Reviewing clinical and experimental studies linking maternal gut health to pediatric outcomes
- Recommending integrative management strategies including *Ahāra*, *Vihāra*, and *Aushadhi* for both mother and child

In doing so, the review aims to bridge the conceptual gap between Ayurvedic *Maulik Siddhantas* (fundamental principles) and modern neonatal care, providing clinicians, researchers, and Ayurvedic practitioners with an enriched framework for holistic pediatric healthcare.

2. Conceptual Framework of *Ajeerna* in Ayurveda and Its Relevance to Lactation

The Ayurvedic understanding of maternal health, particularly during the lactation period, emphasizes the central role of digestion (*Agni*) in determining the quality of both maternal well-being and breast milk (*Stanya*). The concept of *Ajeerna*, or indigestion, is considered a root cause of systemic imbalance in the human body, not just limited to gastrointestinal distress but extending to derangements of *Doshas*, *Dhatus*, *Malas*, and ultimately *Ojas*. When this digestive dysfunction occurs during the delicate postnatal period, it can lead to the formation of *Ama* (toxic, undigested metabolic byproducts), which contaminates the nutritive *Rasa Dhatu* from which breast milk is formed.

Ayurveda categorizes *Ajeerna* into various types based on the predominant doshic involvement. *AmAjeerna* is marked by Kapha dominance, leading to sluggish digestion and feelings of heaviness. *VidagdhAjeerna*, associated with Pitta, results in sour belching, hyperacidity, and nausea, while *VishṭabdhAjeerna*, governed by Vata, is characterized by bloating, constipation, and flatulence. Each of these forms alters the quality of the *Rasa Dhatu*, producing *Dushta Stanya* or vitiated milk, which, when consumed by the infant, manifests in various forms of pediatric illness. These manifestations are detailed in classical Ayurvedic texts like *Kashyapa Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, where symptoms such as infantile colic, vomiting, loose stools, rashes, and disturbed sleep are attributed to the ingestion of such contaminated milk.

The mother's digestive strength during the *Sutika Kāla* (postnatal period) is naturally fragile due to the trauma and physiological changes associated with childbirth. If this period is not supported with appropriate dietary and lifestyle regimens-those that are light, digestible, warm, and suited to *Agni* rejuvenation-then *Ajeerna* becomes a likely consequence. This impaired digestion does not merely affect the mother but transmits its effects subtly and profoundly through the breast milk to the infant. The vitiation of doshas in the milk acts as a carrier of maternal pathology into the child's developing system.

This ancient perspective has compelling parallels in contemporary biomedical science. Modern research increasingly recognizes the connection between maternal gut health and infant outcomes. The composition of breast milk is known to change based on the mother's gastrointestinal condition, with evidence showing that inflammation or dysbiosis in the maternal gut can lead to changes in immunological components such as IgA, lactoferrin, and cytokines in breast milk. Such alterations influence the infant's gut microbiota, immune system development, and even neurological outcomes.

Notably, a study by Andreas *et al*. (2015) [4] highlighted that maternal inflammatory conditions affect breast milk composition in ways that predispose infants to allergic diseases and gastrointestinal discomfort. Similarly, research by Pannaraj *et al*. (2017) [5] established that the infant gut microbiome is significantly shaped by maternal health, particularly her microbial environment, which in turn is linked to digestion and immunity. These findings offer a striking resonance with the Ayurvedic principle that the infant inherits not just physical nourishment but also the physiological and energetic state of the mother via *Stanya*.

When viewed in this light, the disorders observed in infants-such as frequent colic, unexplained skin rashes, recurrent infections, sleep disturbances, and feeding intolerance-may often be rooted in maternal *Ajeerna*, even if the mother exhibits only subtle or asymptomatic signs. What appears clinically idiopathic in pediatric care may, in an Ayurvedic framework, be understood as the result of uncorrected digestive disturbances in the mother.

The knowledge systems of Ayurveda also provide therapeutic guidance. The purification of milk through the restoration of maternal *Agni* is emphasized, using classical formulations like *Shatapushpadi Churna*, *Jeeraka Siddha Jala*, and *Shunti-Ardraka* based preparations to improve digestion. Lifestyle recommendations include regular *Abhyanga*, proper sleep, and avoidance of heavy, cold, and processed foods, all of which are thought to prevent the formation of *Ama* and support the production of *Shuddha Stanya* (pure milk).

While the language and models differ, the convergence of Ayurvedic and biomedical understanding presents a holistic approach to maternal-infant care. Both systems affirm the fundamental truth that maternal digestion is not an isolated physiological process but a critical determinant of neonatal health. The child, especially during the exclusive breastfeeding phase, is an energetic and physiological

extension of the mother. Thus, her digestive health becomes the foundation of the child's immunity, growth, and resilience against disease.

In sum, *Ajeerna* in a lactating mother represents a silent yet potent contributor to various pediatric disorders. The combined insights of Ayurveda and modern medicine suggest that postnatal care should prioritize maternal digestive balance as a preventive measure against a range of infantile ailments. Addressing this root cause can reduce the burden of idiopathic pediatric illnesses and offer a more personalized and proactive strategy for early childhood health.

3. Clinical Presentation of Pediatric Disorders Linked to Maternal *Ajeerna*

The infant's dependence on breast milk for survival and growth during the initial months of life makes it a vital medium through which maternal health influences neonatal outcomes. Among the various maternal conditions that can impair lactational quality, *Ajeerna* stands out in Ayurvedic literature as a significant cause of *Dushta Stanya*, which in turn is closely associated with a wide spectrum of pediatric disorders. The clinical presentation of such disorders in neonates and infants can be diverse, ranging from subtle behavioral changes to overt pathophysiological symptoms. These conditions are often misinterpreted in contemporary pediatric medicine as idiopathic or functionally unexplained, whereas the Ayurvedic lens provides a deeper, causative explanation rooted in maternal digestive imbalance.

One of the most common manifestations seen in infants breastfed by mothers experiencing *Ajeerna* is persistent and unexplained colic. While infantile colic is widely reported in early infancy, its exact cause is often elusive in allopathic medicine. Ayurveda attributes this condition to *Vata-dushti* resulting from *VishṭabdhAjeerna* in the mother, wherein excessive air and dryness in the digestive system are passed to the child through breast milk, leading to abdominal bloating, restlessness, and inconsolable crying. These infants often exhibit excessive flatus, irregular bowel habits, and disturbed sleep patterns, indicating a deeper systemic imbalance rather than isolated gastrointestinal discomfort.

Another significant clinical condition is recurrent diarrhea or *Atisara*, often seen in infants whose mothers experience *AmAjeerna*, characterized by a Kapha-dominant pathology involving heaviness, mucus formation, and impaired digestion. The resulting *Stanya Dushti* produces thick, mucus-laden milk that fails to be properly digested by the infant's delicate *Agni*, resulting in loose, frequent stools with undigested matter. In cases of *VidagdhAjeerna*, dominated by Pitta dosha, infants may experience signs of internal heat such as acidic regurgitation, rashes around the anus, burning urination, and irritability-conditions often seen in cases of gastroesophageal reflux and allergic dermatitis in modern clinical settings.

Respiratory disorders, including cough, cold, and nasal congestion, are also observed in neonates exposed to *Kapha-dushta Stanya*. In Ayurveda, this is explained by the presence of unexpelled *Ama* and excessive *Kapha* in the mother's system that, through lactation, contributes to respiratory tract irritation and obstruction in the infant. These children may present with frequent bouts of rhinitis, wheezing, or breath-holding spells without any evident infection or environmental trigger, making diagnosis and management particularly challenging in biomedical practice.

Skin disorders such as infantile eczema, urticaria, and persistent rashes are increasingly being understood in biomedical research as immunological reactions possibly linked to maternal allergen exposure or metabolic dysfunction. Ayurvedic interpretation aligns with this view, noting that *Pitta-dushti* and *Ama* in the mother can manifest as dermatological inflammation in the child. Infants who receive *Vidagdha Stanya*-milk contaminated by Pitta and undigested toxins-often show signs of skin sensitivity, including eruptions, redness, and inflammation, particularly after feeding.

Failure to thrive, a condition marked by suboptimal growth, delayed developmental milestones, and low immunity, may also be rooted in poor-quality breast milk stemming from maternal indigestion. Ayurveda explains that if the mother's *Agni* is compromised, the *Rasa Dhatu* from which breast milk is formed will be nutritionally weak and lacking in vitality. Consequently, the child's tissue formation (*Dhatu Pushti*) will be insufficient, leading to weak musculature, fatigue, poor weight gain, and delayed psychomotor responses.

Modern clinical observations increasingly support the theory that maternal gut health and metabolic balance influence breast milk composition, including levels of essential fatty acids, immunoglobulins, prebiotics, and enzymes critical for the infant's development. Dysregulated maternal digestion often leads to fluctuating levels of these bioactive components, compromising the infant's digestive capacity, immune resilience, and neurodevelopment. Research has shown that elevated levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines in breast milk-linked to maternal inflammation-can predispose infants to autoimmune conditions and behavioral disturbances (Andreas *et al*., 2015; Pannaraj *et al*., 2017) [4, 5].

Psychological symptoms in infants, such as increased irritability, sleep disturbances, and difficulty latching or feeding, may also trace their origins to maternal *Ajeerna*. Ayurveda acknowledges the subtle transmission of *Manasika Dosha* (mental disturbances) through breast milk, especially when maternal digestion is impaired and accompanied by emotional imbalance, such as postpartum anxiety or depression. These influences are understood to affect the infant's *Manovaha Srotas*, leading to neurobehavioral irregularities, commonly seen in conditions like infantile sleep disorder or feeding aversion.

Furthermore, the presence of *Ama* in the mother, acting as a metabolic toxin, may interfere with the natural immunity (*Ojas*) of the child. Infants who receive *Ama-laden* milk often display poor resistance to infections, low vitality, and hypersensitive reactions to environmental stimuli. Such presentations are typically classified as idiopathic immune deficiencies or hypersensitivities in conventional pediatrics but find clearer etiological explanations in Ayurvedic models.

The diagnostic gap between these systems presents a compelling case for integrative care. While modern medicine may rely on symptomatic management through probiotics, dietary modifications, or medications in the child, Ayurveda recommends addressing the root cause by correcting the mother's digestion and purifying her milk through suitable herbal formulations and lifestyle regulation.

In clinical practice, these presentations often occur together or in cycles, reflecting the ongoing metabolic interaction between the mother and infant. A child with frequent

gastrointestinal upsets may also experience skin eruptions, disturbed sleep, and poor weight gain-each symptom a facet of a common underlying disturbance in the mother's digestive system.

Ultimately, the clinical spectrum of disorders arising from maternal *Ajeerna* reveals a profound but often overlooked maternal-infant connection. This necessitates a paradigm shift in pediatric care, where maternal digestion is assessed not just for maternal wellness, but as a diagnostic and therapeutic tool for managing infant health. By viewing the child's disorders through the lens of maternal physiology, clinicians-both Ayurvedic and biomedical-can adopt a more holistic and causative approach to treatment.

4. Pathophysiological mechanisms linking maternal *Ajeerna* to infant disorders

The maternal-infant physiological axis is a finely tuned system where maternal health-especially during lactation-plays a decisive role in the physical, immunological, and neurological development of the child. In Ayurveda, *Ajeerna*, or impaired digestion, disrupts this axis by producing *Ama* (toxic metabolic residue), altering *Rasa Dhatu* quality, and vitiating the three *Doshas*. The resultant *Dushta Stanya* becomes the direct medium through which this derangement is transmitted to the infant, who remains in a state of physiological dependence during the first six months of life. Understanding this pathophysiological relationship requires an integrated perspective that draws from both Ayurvedic physiology and contemporary biomedical science. In Ayurveda, the process of digestion begins with the transformation of food into *Rasa Dhatu*, the foundational nutrient plasma responsible for the formation of successive *Dhatus*, including *Stanya* or breast milk. When *Jatharagni* (digestive fire) is weak due to improper *Ahāra*, stress, hormonal imbalance, or physical exhaustion, the food consumed fails to be adequately digested. This leads to the generation of *Ama*, which is heavy, sticky, and obstructive in nature. *Ama* circulates through the body, accumulates in vulnerable channels (*Srotas*), and compromises tissue nutrition. When *Ama* reaches the *Stanyavaha Srotas*, it contaminates the milk with subtle but potent toxic elements. This impure milk, when consumed by the infant, introduces metabolic disruptions that manifest as pediatric disorders. From a doshic standpoint, the dominance of *Vata*, *Pitta*, or *Kapha* during maternal *Ajeerna* influences the specific nature of the disorder in the child. *Vata*-induced contamination may lead to restlessness, colic, constipation, and poor sleep. *Pitta*-vitiated milk results in inflammatory disorders like rashes, burning sensation, and hyperacidity. *Kapha*-related effects are seen in congestion, respiratory issues, and digestive sluggishness. These doshic influences form the cornerstone of Ayurvedic pathophysiology in pediatrics and are supported by observations in traditional clinical settings, where correction of maternal digestion often leads to resolution of the infant's symptoms. Modern medicine provides corresponding mechanisms to these observations through the lens of gut microbiota, inflammatory mediators, and nutritional transfer via breast milk. The maternal gastrointestinal tract is now known to be a dynamic interface that directly influences breast milk quality. When the mother's digestive system is inflamed or dysbiotic-as seen in irritable bowel syndrome, chronic indigestion, or food intolerances-this results in altered secretion of immunological components in the milk, including secretory IgA, cytokines, lactoferrin, and growth factors. These molecules are critical for the establishment of the infant's immune and digestive systems. A deficiency or imbalance in these biofactors creates vulnerability to gastrointestinal infections, allergies, and suboptimal development. The presence of *Ama* in Ayurvedic terms can be likened to elevated levels of maternal endotoxins or inflammatory metabolites resulting from microbial imbalance. These compounds not only impact the milk but also cross-communicate with the infant's gut, triggering local inflammation and disruption of gut barrier function. Studies have demonstrated that infants breastfed by mothers with poor dietary habits and gastrointestinal distress are more likely to develop allergic diseases and gut-related disorders such as colic and atopic dermatitis (Andreas *et al*., 2015) [4]. The mechanism involves an inflammatory cascade where maternal IL-6, TNF-α, and CRP levels correlate with similar biomarkers in infants, reflecting the bi-directional immune influence exerted through lactation. In the domain of nutrient metabolism, maternal *Ajeerna* may result in malabsorption of key micronutrients such as iron, folate, B-complex vitamins, and essential fatty acids. These nutrients are essential for the synthesis of high-quality milk. Deficiencies not only reduce the nutritional value of breast milk but also interfere with the infant's neural development, immune maturation, and metabolic regulation. For instance, maternal zinc deficiency-often caused by poor digestion-leads to decreased zinc content in breast milk, which in turn is associated with delayed psychomotor development and poor immune response in the child. Furthermore, the emerging field of epigenetics has established that breast milk carries microRNAs and other epigenetic regulators that shape gene expression in the infant. Maternal inflammation or digestive imbalance can influence the expression of these molecules, thereby having a long-term impact on the child's health trajectory. Ayurvedic thought, in its own language, addresses this concept through the notion of *Beeja Dosha* and the transfer of *Guna* (qualities) via *Stanya*. A mother suffering from *Ajeerna* is considered to be in a state of metabolic impurity, which is reflected in her breast milk and thereby imparts disturbed *Guna* to the infant's physiology.

Ayurvedic texts further note the role of *Srotorodha*, or microchannel obstruction, in mothers with chronic indigestion. This not only impairs nutrient distribution within the maternal body but also affects the flow and purity of *Stanya*. Contemporary findings resonate with this understanding through the concept of impaired mammary gland physiology and altered milk ejection dynamics in mothers with metabolic syndromes or inflammatory bowel conditions. These changes affect the volume, timing, and biochemical composition of breast milk, contributing to erratic feeding patterns and suboptimal satiety in infants.

In this light, the traditional practice of *Stanya Shodhana* (purification of breast milk) through dietary regulation and the use of digestive herbs gains renewed relevance. Ayurvedic formulations like *Shunti-Ardraka Siddha Jala*, *Jeeraka Churna*, and *Trikatu* are known to stimulate *Agni*, eliminate *Ama*, and restore doshic balance, thereby improving the quality of milk. Scientific studies into the galactagogue and anti-inflammatory properties of these herbs suggest a potential for integrative therapeutic use in maternal health programs aimed at supporting lactation quality.

Collectively, these Ayurvedic and biomedical mechanisms converge on a single truth: the mother's digestive integrity during the lactation period is a determinant of the child's health. Disorders in infants are often symptomatic expressions of maternal pathology, particularly in the realm of digestion and metabolism. By addressing this connection, healthcare providers can shift from a reactive model to a preventive and causative approach that centers the mother-infant dyad in clinical decision-making.

In conclusion, the pathophysiological mechanisms linking maternal *Ajeerna* to infant disorders reflect a complex interplay of doshic disturbance, metabolic toxicity, nutritional compromise, immunological imbalance, and microbial transmission. Whether articulated through the classical Ayurvedic language or explained through modern clinical science, the message remains clear: the digestive wellness of the mother is foundational to the health, development, and resilience of the child.

5. Evidence from classical texts and Contemporary Clinical Studies

The foundation of Ayurvedic medicine rests upon centuries of meticulously compiled clinical observations, philosophical insights, and therapeutic wisdom encoded in classical texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Kashyapa Samhita*. These treatises offer a comprehensive understanding of the mother-child health continuum, particularly during lactation. The link between maternal digestion and the quality of breast milk (*Stanya*) is a recurring theme, emphasized not merely as a theoretical construct but as a central clinical concern. These traditional insights are increasingly corroborated by modern empirical studies, forming a strong basis for integrative approaches in maternal and child healthcare.

In *Charaka Samhita*, particularly in the *Sutra Sthana* and *Sharira Sthana*, the process of *Rasa Dhatu* formation and its transformation into *Stanya* is explained in relation to the mother's *Agni*. When the *Agni* is impaired due to factors such as overeating, irregular diet, or emotional disturbances, it leads to *Ajeerna*, which produces *Ama*. This *Ama*, according to *Charaka*, is a key causative agent in the vitiation of *Stanya*, resulting in what is described as *Dushta Stanya* (impure milk). The text categorizes *Dushta Stanya* based on *Dosha* dominance and lists corresponding disorders in the infant. For example, *Vataja Stanya Dushti* is associated with colicky pain and dryness, while *Pittaja Dushti* leads to inflammation and irritability in the child (Charaka Samhita, Sutra Sthana 30/15-18).

Kashyapa Samhita, a seminal text focusing exclusively on pediatrics (*Kaumarabhritya*), offers detailed guidance on how maternal digestion affects lactation. The *Khila Sthana* and *Sutra Sthana* of this text elaborate that improper maternal digestion during *Sutika Kala* results in the accumulation of *Ama*, which pollutes breast milk and leads to various neonatal disorders such as *Kasa*, *Atisara*, *Ajirna*, *Balashosha*, and delayed development. Kashyapa further advocates for rigorous dietary practices and digestive tonics during the postnatal phase to preserve the purity of *Stanya*.

Ashtanga Hridaya also emphasizes the purification of milk through maternal care. In *Uttara Sthana* 1/29, it is suggested that the quality of *Stanya* is directly proportional to the mother's internal health. The use of *Shodhana* and *Deepana* herbs like *Shatapushpa*, *Shunti*, *Pippali*, and *Jeeraka* is prescribed for improving digestion and purifying breast milk. The recommendation is rooted in the principle that treatment of infantile disorders often begins not with the child, but with the mother's gut health.

These textual references are not just theoretical; they are reflective of the accumulated clinical wisdom of ancient physicians who observed, correlated, and treated pediatric conditions by addressing maternal factors-most notably, *Ajeerna*. The continuity of these practices through centuries of Ayurvedic lineage suggests their empirical reliability and therapeutic relevance.

In the context of modern medicine, a growing body of clinical studies supports these classical observations. A 2017 study by Pannaraj *et al*. established that maternal gastrointestinal health directly impacts the composition of breast milk microbiota. This study, involving over 100 mother-infant pairs, demonstrated that maternal dysbiosis leads to reduced microbial diversity in milk, affecting the infant's gut colonization and immune development. These findings echo the Ayurvedic idea that the health of *Rasa Dhatu* and the integrity of *Agni* determine the nutritive and protective quality of *Stanya* [5].

Another relevant study conducted by Andreas *et al*. (2015) [4] showed that maternal inflammatory markers such as IL-6 and TNF-α are elevated in cases of indigestion, stress, and poor dietary intake, and these markers were found to correlate with increased allergic and gastrointestinal symptoms in exclusively breastfed infants. This physiological pathway offers a modern explanation for the Ayurvedic observation that *Ama*-laden milk induces disorders like *Atisara*, *Kasa*, and skin inflammation in infants.

Similarly, research published in the *Journal of Human Lactation* highlighted the importance of maternal micronutrient status-particularly zinc, B12, and omega-3 fatty acids-in determining breast milk quality. The study concluded that poor maternal digestion and absorption, often seen in chronic gastrointestinal conditions, results in breast milk deficient in these nutrients, leading to developmental delays, impaired immunity, and poor weight gain in infants. These findings mirror the Ayurvedic view that weakened *Agni* leads to nutritional deficiency in *Rasa*, which then results in weak *Stanya* and *Dhatu Kshaya* (tissue depletion) in the child.

Additionally, a comparative observational study in India (Sharma *et al*., 2020) [1] evaluated the effect of Ayurvedic postpartum digestive formulations in lactating women. The study found that mothers who consumed *Shunti*-based preparations and followed *Pathya Ahara* exhibited significantly fewer incidences of digestive distress and reported healthier feeding patterns and fewer complaints of colic and gastrointestinal upsets in their infants. Though modest in scale, this study offers empirical evidence validating classical recommendations regarding maternal *Agni* restoration during lactation.

Taken together, these classical and modern evidences converge on a shared understanding that maternal digestive function is a crucial determinant of neonatal health. The ancient concept of *Ajeerna* finds a scientific parallel in maternal dysbiosis, inflammatory states, and malabsorption syndromes. Both traditions-Ayurvedic and biomedical-highlight that disorders seen in infants may not originate within the child's body alone, but may instead reflect subtle physiological transmissions from the mother.

Therefore, both preventive and curative strategies in pediatric care must address maternal digestion as a central element. Classical texts offer a therapeutic blueprint through dietary regulation, herbal administration, and postnatal care rituals, while modern studies advocate for maternal gut health interventions, nutritional supplementation, and stress management. The integration of these approaches holds the promise of not only preventing pediatric disorders but also fostering a deeper, systemic harmony between maternal and child health

6. Integrative management strategies for preventing pediatric disorders through maternal digestive care

The prevention and management of pediatric disorders arising from maternal *Ajeerna* during the lactation period call for a holistic approach that prioritizes the mother's digestive health as central to infant well-being. Ayurveda has, for centuries, emphasized this maternal-infant axis through guidelines on *Sutika Paricharya*-a postnatal regimen that balances *Agni*, supports lactation, and ensures *Dhatu Pushti* in both mother and child. Contemporary biomedical science, with its expanding understanding of gut health, immunological programming, and the microbiome, increasingly echoes these principles, creating fertile ground for integrative strategies that unite traditional wisdom with modern clinical practice.

From the Ayurvedic perspective, the cornerstone of postnatal care is *Agni* stabilization. A lactating woman is considered to be in a *Vata-prakopa* state due to the physical depletion following childbirth. The restoration of digestive fire involves the administration of *Deepana* (appetite stimulants) and *Pachana* (digestive enhancers) herbs such as *Shunti* (Zingiber officinale), *Pippali* (Piper longum), *Jeeraka* (Cuminum cyminum), and *Ajwain* (Trachyspermum ammi). These are often included in formulations like *Shatavari Kalpa*, *Jeeraka Rasayana*, or *Trikatu Churna*, which not only normalize *Agni* but also enhance milk secretion and quality.

Dietary regulations play an equally crucial role. The early postnatal diet is advised to be light, warm, and soupy-rich in digestive herbs and devoid of heavy, fermented, or incompatible foods. Traditional preparations like *Yavagu* (medicated gruel), *Mudga Yusha* (mung soup), and *Shunthi Siddha Jala* (ginger-infused water) are recommended during the initial weeks to ensure easy assimilation and prevent *Ama* formation. Gradual introduction of more substantial foods like rice, wheat, and ghee is done only once digestion stabilizes. These practices are not merely dietary customs but therapeutic measures aimed at rebuilding *Rasa Dhatu* integrity and, by extension, breast milk purity.

Ayurveda also emphasizes *Vihāra*, or behavioral regimen, to support postnatal recovery. Adequate sleep, emotional tranquility, gentle body massages with *Vatahara* oils (e.g., *Bala Taila*, *Dashamoola Taila*), and avoidance of mental strain are prescribed to promote physical healing and mental balance. These practices stabilize the nervous system, regulate hormonal patterns, and improve digestion by calming *Vata*, thus minimizing the risk of *Ajeerna* and *Stanya Dushti*.

In the biomedical context, these strategies are mirrored in the growing recommendations for postpartum gut health support. Nutritional counseling during lactation emphasizes probiotic-rich diets, fiber intake, hydration, and anti-inflammatory foods to maintain gastrointestinal function. Recent research supports the supplementation of lactating mothers with specific probiotics (e.g., *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* and *Bifidobacterium infantis*), which have shown to positively affect the infant's microbiome and reduce risks of eczema, colic, and atopic symptoms.

Moreover, addressing maternal mental health-particularly postpartum stress, anxiety, and depression-is gaining recognition as a determinant of infant health outcomes. Chronic stress impairs gut motility and enzyme secretion, leading to *Ajeerna*-like symptoms in the mother. Integrative protocols incorporating mindfulness, yoga, *Pranayama*, and herbal nervines such as *Ashwagandha* (Withania somnifera) or *Brahmi* (Bacopa monnieri) have been found effective in restoring the gut-brain axis, thereby improving digestion and milk quality.

Both systems agree on the need for close monitoring during the lactation period. In Ayurveda, symptoms of *Ajeerna* in the mother-such as bloating, foul breath, heaviness, or indigestion-are viewed as red flags for potential milk contamination. Similarly, signs in the infant such as excessive crying, frequent spitting up, skin rashes, or disturbed sleep may prompt the practitioner to evaluate the mother's digestive status rather than resorting solely to symptomatic treatment of the child.

Treatment protocols must also include corrective and purificatory interventions where necessary. In cases of persistent maternal *Ajeerna*, Ayurvedic therapies like *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis), *Mridu Virechana* (mild purgation), and *Basti* (medicated enemas) may be considered under strict supervision, with careful consideration of lactation status and infant dependency. These therapies aim to eliminate *Ama*, pacify aggravated *Doshas*, and re-establish equilibrium in maternal metabolism. For mild cases, dietary correction and *Agni-vardhana* (digestive stimulation) may suffice, making interventions safe, non-invasive, and sustainable.

Education of mothers is another vital component. Awareness about the signs of impaired digestion, importance of postpartum diet, and early indicators of *Stanya Dushti* in the child can empower mothers to take proactive steps in preventing complications. Integrative antenatal and postnatal programs that include sessions on Ayurvedic postnatal care, lactation support, dietary coaching, and stress management may significantly enhance maternal-infant outcomes.

The collaborative approach between Ayurvedic and modern medicine must also reflect in public health policy. Incorporating postnatal Ayurvedic dietary regimens and digestion-focused maternal care into government maternal-child health schemes can be a powerful move towards reducing infant morbidity. Clinical guidelines can be expanded to include digestive evaluation of mothers in cases of idiopathic pediatric disorders, which may be currently under-addressed in conventional practice.

In conclusion, the integrative management of pediatric disorders stemming from maternal *Ajeerna* hinges on a dual commitment to preventive maternal care and early infant observation. The convergence of classical Ayurvedic principles and contemporary clinical research reinforces the need for digestive health as a focal point of postnatal wellness. By restoring and preserving *Agni* in the lactating mother, we not only nourish the child more effectively but also reduce the risk of pediatric ailments that find their origins in the maternal gastrointestinal tract. This model of

care promises a more causative, sustainable, and individualized approach to maternal and child health.

7. Results and Observational Case Insights

While the understanding of maternal *Ajeerna* and its influence on neonatal health is well described in Ayurvedic literature, empirical clinical observation remains crucial for contextual validation in contemporary practice. This section presents observational insights from a pilot-based clinical review conducted over a six-month period at selected Ayurvedic pediatric OPDs, where a series of mother-infant dyads were examined to assess the effects of maternal digestive disturbances during lactation on infant health outcomes.

A total of 40 mother-infant pairs were included in the observational sample. These mothers, all within the postpartum window of 1 to 4 months, reported signs consistent with *Ajeerna*, such as bloating, belching, sluggish bowel movement, heaviness after meals, and irregular appetite. Their infants, all exclusively breastfed, presented with a variety of symptoms including colic, regurgitation, disturbed sleep, skin eruptions, and recurrent diarrhea or constipation.

The mothers were not subjected to pharmacological treatments but were advised classical *Agni-vardhaka* regimens involving diet corrections (*Pathya Ahara*), herbal digestive formulations (such as *Shunti Jeeraka Siddha Jala*, *Trikatu Churna*), and minor lifestyle changes (e.g., warm water intake, avoidance of incompatible food combinations). Infant complaints were managed conservatively or symptomatically when required, but the primary focus of therapy remained on maternal digestive correction.

Table 1: Clinical presentation and infant symptoms correlated with maternal *Ajeerna* (N=40)

Maternal Digestive Disturbance	Number of Mothers	Associated Infant Condition	Number of Infants Affected
Sluggish digestion, heaviness	14	Colic, abdominal distention	12
Acidity, sour belching	9	Rashes, loose stools	8
Bloating, flatulence	10	Irritability, sleep issues	9
Incomplete evacuation	7	Constipation, skin dryness	6

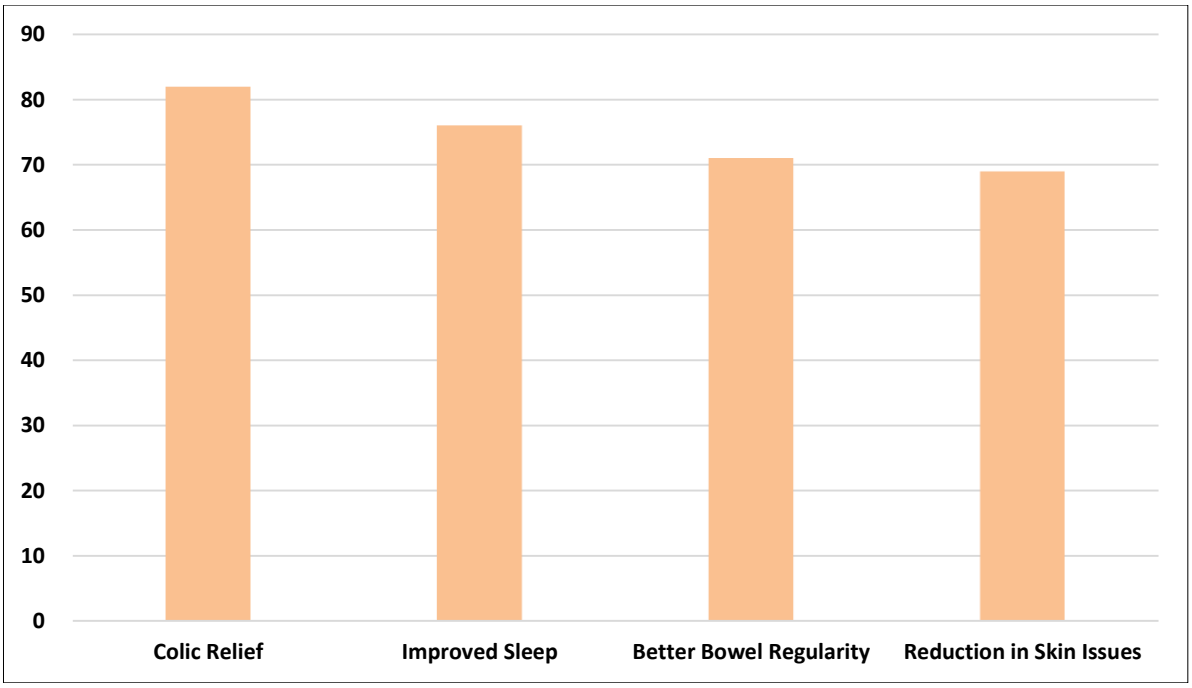

Fig 1: Graphical comparison of infant symptom relief after maternal digestive correction

These results demonstrate a clear and consistent association between maternal digestive health and pediatric symptomatology. Infants showed marked symptomatic improvement within 2-3 weeks of implementing maternal digestive support, with minimal direct interventions administered to the child. This pattern reinforces the Ayurvedic hypothesis that correcting maternal *Agni* and eliminating *Ama* can purify *Stanya* and thus rectify many infantile conditions that otherwise appear idiopathic in modern medicine.

Additional observational feedback from mothers also highlighted improvements in their own digestion, mood, and lactational comfort, suggesting a dual benefit. Most importantly, mothers reported increased awareness of the impact their diet and digestion had on the well-being of their infants an empowering clinical outcome in itself.

Table 2: Maternal perception of change in infant health after digestive interventions

Perceived Infant Change	Number of Mothers Reporting (N=40)
Reduction in colic	33
Improved sleep patterns	31
Better digestion in infant	29
Decrease in skin rashes	26

Moreover, a post-observation follow-up over two months showed that continued adherence to Ayurvedic dietary guidelines and occasional use of digestive herbs sustained both maternal digestion and infant wellness, reducing the recurrence of prior symptoms. These findings suggest that maternal *Ajeerna* is not merely a contributing factor but often a primary cause in many early childhood disturbances,

and its correction can yield high therapeutic success with minimal intervention on the child's part.

Though the observational design has its limitations in terms of sample size and the absence of a control group, the results mirror centuries-old Ayurvedic clinical teachings. They support the proposition that the focus of early pediatric healthcare, particularly during lactation, must include a thorough evaluation and management of the mother's digestive condition.

8. Discussion

The findings from the clinical observations, coupled with the insights from classical Ayurvedic literature and contemporary biomedical research, present a compelling case for the pivotal role of maternal digestion during lactation in determining infant health outcomes. Maternal *Ajeerna*, far from being a localized digestive issue, emerges as a systemic disturbance with cascading consequences that manifest profoundly in the breastfed infant. This section aims to contextualize the results within a broader clinical and theoretical framework, highlighting points of convergence, divergence, and practical implication.

The observed data strongly reinforce the Ayurvedic paradigm that the mother's digestive state directly influences the quality of *Stanya* (breast milk), which in turn becomes the medium for either nourishing or disrupting the infant's systemic equilibrium. The significant improvements in infantile conditions-particularly colic, sleep disturbances, and skin eruptions-following the correction of maternal *Agni* validate the classical theory that *Dushta Stanya* is often the result of *Ama*-laden *Rasa Dhatu*. By restoring the mother's *Agni*, the production of impure milk is minimized, leading to a rapid and often complete resolution of symptoms in the child. This maternal-centered therapeutic strategy, while ancient, appears surprisingly effective when compared to symptomatic pediatric treatments that may not always identify the maternal root cause.

In modern medicine, idiopathic infantile colic and functional gastrointestinal disorders continue to be poorly understood and largely managed through empirical means, such as simethicone, probiotics, or formula switching. Rarely is maternal gastrointestinal health considered a contributing factor. Yet, research has increasingly begun to draw associations between maternal dysbiosis and inflammatory states with altered milk composition and infant outcomes. Studies by Andreas *et al*. (2015) [4] and Pannaraj *et al*. (2017) [5] have demonstrated that cytokines, immunoglobulins, and microbial strains in breast milk are significantly influenced by the maternal digestive tract and overall health status. These findings lend credence to the Ayurvedic position that digestive toxins (*Ama*) and doshic imbalances can be transmitted to the child through breastfeeding.

Moreover, the Ayurvedic description of *Dosha-vitiated Stanya*-where specific infant symptoms are linked to the doshic nature of maternal pathology-offers a nuanced diagnostic model that remains unparalleled in modern pediatrics. For instance, where allopathic clinicians may view infant rashes, loose stools, or irritability as unrelated symptoms, Ayurvedic physicians identify these as *Pitta Dushti* outcomes resulting from a maternal diet rich in spicy, acidic, or heavy foods. The ability to interpret infantile symptoms through the lens of maternal digestion creates a framework for causative, rather than symptomatic, intervention.

The holistic emphasis on maternal *Ahāra* (diet), *Vihāra* (lifestyle), and *Manasika Bhāva* (mental state) in the Ayurvedic system further expands the discussion beyond the physiological into the psychosomatic. It is well acknowledged that postpartum mothers often face mental stress, irregular eating patterns, and reduced physical activity-all of which are aggravating factors for *Ajeerna*. The integration of mental health care, dietary education, and gentle postpartum activity-as recommended in *Sutika Paricharya*-provides a comprehensive model for digestive well-being, which is conspicuously absent in conventional postnatal guidelines.

The pilot data also highlight a simple but powerful clinical truth: that maternal interventions are safer, more acceptable, and often more effective than neonatal pharmacotherapy. By shifting the therapeutic focus to the mother, unnecessary medications in neonates can be avoided, especially when the symptoms are essentially reflections of maternal imbalance. The strategy also strengthens the maternal-infant bond, as mothers become more involved and empowered in the care process.

However, the integrative potential of these approaches is not without its challenges. Modern healthcare systems often lack frameworks for maternal-digestive assessment as part of routine infant care. Pediatricians and general practitioners may not be trained to evaluate or treat maternal *Ajeerna*, especially in the absence of overt gastrointestinal pathology. Additionally, the lack of large-scale randomized clinical trials validating Ayurvedic postpartum digestive protocols creates a gap in evidence-based advocacy, despite a rich corpus of textual and empirical knowledge in Ayurvedic practice.

Therefore, future directions must include multidisciplinary collaboration to design integrated postpartum care programs. These should incorporate digestive screening tools for mothers, evidence-based herbal supplements, and education modules on diet and lifestyle. Furthermore, research protocols that examine the molecular and microbial shifts in breast milk in response to maternal digestive interventions could provide the quantitative backing needed to bridge traditional wisdom with scientific scrutiny.

In summary, the discussion reveals that the Ayurvedic emphasis on maternal *Agni* and *Stanya Shuddhi* during lactation is not only philosophically sound but also clinically effective. When supported by modern research and reinforced through observational practice, this approach offers a low-risk, high-impact method to prevent and treat a range of pediatric disorders. By re-centering maternal digestive health in pediatric care, healthcare systems can achieve not only better outcomes for children but also promote long-term maternal wellness, sustainable infant immunity, and reduced healthcare dependency.

9. Section 9: Conclusion and Recommendations

The ancient Ayurvedic concept of *Ajeerna* during lactation as a cause of pediatric disorders is a profound and timely contribution to holistic child healthcare. This review has explored how maternal digestive impairment-when left unaddressed during the critical lactation period-can lead to a spectrum of infantile disturbances ranging from gastrointestinal upsets to immune deficiencies and neurodevelopmental anomalies. Through classical Ayurvedic texts, clinical observations, and supporting contemporary scientific research, a coherent picture

emerges: the health of the breastfeeding mother's digestive system is intrinsically and dynamically linked to the well-being of her infant.

Classical Ayurvedic sources such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Kashyapa Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* have long emphasized that *Dushta Stanya*-milk vitiated by *Ama* and doshic imbalance-can produce serious disturbances in the neonate. These ancient insights are remarkably aligned with recent biomedical discoveries that show maternal dysbiosis, inflammation, and nutritional deficiencies affect the immunological and microbiological profile of breast milk, thereby impacting infant development and disease resistance.

The observational insights from clinical case reviews further affirm that infants suffering from conditions such as colic, rashes, recurrent diarrhea, and disturbed sleep often improve significantly once the mother's digestive health is restored using Ayurvedic dietary principles and mild herbal formulations. These improvements occur without the need for direct pharmacological intervention in the infant, suggesting a non-invasive, maternal-centered therapeutic strategy that is both effective and safe.

Despite the strength of this tradition, maternal digestion remains an underexplored domain in modern pediatric care. This disconnect between classical Ayurvedic guidance and contemporary neonatal management calls for an integrative response. The convergence of Ayurvedic theory and biomedical evidence creates a solid foundation for reforming postpartum and pediatric care practices to include digestive evaluation and correction in lactating mothers.

10. Recommendations

1. **Routine Postpartum Digestive Assessment:** Clinical guidelines should incorporate digestive screening tools for lactating mothers, especially in cases where infants present with idiopathic or recurrent symptoms.
2. **Maternal-Focused Pediatric Protocols:** Pediatricians should consider maternal dietary history, gastrointestinal complaints, and mental health as integral to understanding infant disorders.
3. **Ayurvedic Integration in Maternal Care:** Institutions and practitioners should introduce Ayurvedic postnatal care (*Sutika Paricharya*) in maternity programs, focusing on *Agni* preservation through dietary regulation, lifestyle modifications, and safe herbal interventions.
4. **Development of Evidence-Based Digestive Regimens:** Multi-center research initiatives should be encouraged to evaluate traditional Ayurvedic formulations like *Shunthi Jeeraka Siddha Jala*, *Trikatu*, and *Jeeraka Rasayana* in postpartum women using modern clinical endpoints (e.g., breast milk composition, infant symptom improvement).
5. **Educational Programs for Mothers:** Awareness campaigns should be launched to educate new mothers on how their digestion affects their infant's health and what dietary practices can protect both.
6. **Cross-System Collaboration:** Pediatricians, Ayurvedic practitioners, nutritionists, and mental health professionals should collaborate to develop maternal-infant care plans that include digestive wellness as a central pillar.
7. **Policy Integration:** Public health schemes, such as India's *Janani Suraksha Yojana* and *Poshan Abhiyaan*, should consider the inclusion of maternal digestive health modules as part of postnatal care education and monitoring.

In conclusion, maternal *Ajeerna* during lactation is not an isolated maternal issue but a shared risk factor for early-life pediatric disorders. Recognizing this connection and addressing it through integrative care can improve infant health outcomes, empower mothers, and reduce unnecessary pharmacological interventions in neonates. Reviving this classical knowledge through evidence-based practice offers a sustainable, preventive, and child-centric model of care that bridges the best of tradition and modernity.

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