Conceptual review on *balagraha*

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**ABSTRACT:** *Kaumarbhritya* is a branch of *Ashtanga Ayurveda* that defines a unique concept regarding disease caused by unidentified vectors known as *Balagraha*. Unfortunately it is abandoned in today’s era due to its mythological explanation which kept evidences far away from scientific justification. Therefore an effort has been done with an aim to understand *Bala graha* on modern parameters as well as its clinical application in day to day practice. Material for the present review was collected from *Ayurvedic* textbooks. After thorough study of the concept of *balagraha* it is concluded that these unidentified vectors are thought to be microbes which cannot be seen by naked eyes but produce group of diseases of multi systemic-origin and syndromes.

**KEYWORD:** Kaumarbhritya, Balagraha, Graharoga

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INTRODUCTION:
The Graha rogas have separate entity from other general disorders. Their aetiopathogenesis, clinical features, severity, complications and management is entirely different to routine disorder of children. Their progress in human body is very rapid with high morbidity and mortality rate. Therefore, such types of disorders are categorized under the heading of Bala graha. Disease caused by unidentified factors are termed as idiopathic in modern science but Balagraha, Jataharnis, Matrikas, Adibal privrritta and Janam bal privrritta etc. disorders in our classics are attributed to goddess, sins of previous birth and a result of bad deeds in our daily life.

Balagraha is a combination of two words bala + graha. Bala is pertaining to children while ‘Graha’ means to seize or grasp.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BALAGRAHAS :

In Revati kalpadhyaya, Acharya Kashyapa has described morphology, habitat and characters of grahas ¹

• Grahas are visible only to divine vision i.e divyachakshu(microscope).
• They are fond of rakta, mamsa and ojas.
• These dwell at water-tanks (Shitaputana), ruined houses (Putana), cow-sheds (Mukhamandika) and bases of the trees (Pitrigraha).
• Jataharini which attacks pregnant and foetii is highly contagious.
• These vitiate the breast milk of dhatri too.
• Sushruta cautioned that wounds are to be protected fromgrahas and a neonate shall be nursed like a wounded person.

This description of microscopic morphology, innumerable in number, survival in unhygienic atmosphere and blood medium as positive culture, more sustenance in darkness exactly indicates that grahas are no other than, the microorganisms like virus, bacteria etc.

TYPES OF BALAGRAHAS:-

1. Charaka-
According to Charaka Samhita grahas were innumerable in number²

2. Sushruta –
Shucharata has given much importance of bala grahas and given elaborative account on this aspect, These are nine in number, and named
as – Skanda, Skandapasmara, Shakuni, Revati, Putana, Andhaputana, Shitaputana, Mukhamandika and Naigamesa.³

3. Vagbhatta –

Vagbhata has added three more grahas (Swagraha, Pitrigraha and Shushka Revati) with slight variation in nomenclature thus the total numbers become twelve which have been classified as male and female grahas (Gram + ve and Gram –ve microbes) male grahas are five – Skanda, Vishakha, Mesha, Swagraha, Pitrigraha, while female are seven – Shakuni, Putana, Shitaputana, Andhaputana, Mukhamandika, Revati and Shushka Revati.

4. Kashyapa –

In Kashyapa samhita references of bala grahas are scattered at many places viz:

First reference is in sutra sthana where monk described vitiation of breast milk of wet nurse by graha like Shakuni, Skanda, Shasthi and Putana which is the only contribution of Kashyapa however description is incomplete due to extinction of manuscript.

Second reference of balagraha is in Indriya sthan where saint describe symptoms of affected child with various graha like Skanda, Skandapasmara, Pitrigraha, Pundarika, Revati, Shushkarevati, Shakuni, Mukhamandika, Putana and Naigamesa.⁶

Third or final reference has seen in Chikitasa sthana about treatment of child affected by Revati, Putana, Andhaputana, Shitaputana, Kataputana and Mukharika (Mukhamandika) grahas.⁷

AETIOPATHOGENESIS OF BALA – GRAHA

The disorders produced by influence of Grahas are not primarily due to vitiation of doshas but are external in nature. Children are mostly affected by grahas, because they are dependent on other, therefore, are unable to maintain proper hygiene by themselves. Secondly, children are deficient in immunity thus more susceptible for various influences including bala grahas. Sushruta has imagined very intelligently that how these Grahas, enter in the body. He opines that grahas enter the body unperceived. Sushruta illustrate number of different causative factor into two major categories.⁸ One relayed to unhygienic condition in which he told about violation of rule and regulation of lifestyle of child
or mothers such as feeding in unclean and broken vessel with unhealthy condition of surrounding environment. These sound the susceptibility for the precipitation of unhygienic environment together with less immunity of the child which can easily invite the infliction of microbes.

On the other hand second category is related to psychological aspect of child such as showing misconduct in front of priest, teachers and guests and their movement to lonely and inauspicious places. This refers to bipolar mood disorder wherein immunological break down is possible besides consciousness being lost with regard to hygiene directly of child or wet nurse.

**ETIOLOGY OF BALAGRAHAS –**

*Vagbhatta* has clarified that the colonies of *grahas* are innumerable which wander around the world in various shapes to attack the people for threefold purpose viz.⁹

1. Himsa-First purpose illustrates its pathogenic nature and creates a disease e. g. Bleeding disorders
2. Rati -second purpose illustrate microbesenter in the body to complete their life cycle and create a disease e. g. Malaria.
3. Bali -Third purpose explain using host by microbes to get their

nutrition and non pathogenic, may contribute foranabolism e. g. Worm.

Thus the scope of grahas encroaches to minute virus, bacteria, fungi, parasites to the extent of mites etc. Hence hygiene in terms of shuhci and shuddhi (asepsis and antisepsis) plays a major role both to prevent and cure graha rogas.

**PRODROMAL SYMPTOMS-**

Weeping and fever are only two symptoms which are defined in various textbook of Ayurveda.¹⁰

**GENERAL SYMPTOMS-**

The symptoms appearing in a child due to affection of balagraha may depend upon the infliction of that particular graha.Following symptoms of Bala grahas are:

**Graha and its modern correlation –**

1. Skandagraha- Polio, facial palsy, hemiplegia;
2. Skandapasmara/Vishakha-convulsion, epilepsy;
3. Meshagraha-meningitis;
4. Shwagraha-Hydrphobia/Rabies;
5. Pitrigraha- Diarrhea with dehydration;
6. Shakuni-Impetigo, Stomatitis;
7. Putana - Diarrhea with Hypokalemia and paralytic ileus;  
8. Shitaputana- diarrhea with hypocalcemia with hypomagnesemia;  
9. Andhaputana- diarrhea with vit A deficiency with secondary infection;  
10. Revati-Diarrhea with anemia;  
11. Mukhamandika-Childhood cirrhosis,Nephrotic syndrome;  
12. Shushkarevati-marasmus,Abd TB

MANAGEMENT OF BALA GRAHAS
The general line of management as mentioned earlier holds good for all graha rogas by giving priority to absolute hygiene and immunity besides symptomatic management.11

External use

- Parisheka (washing) - It should be done with decoction prepared from Agnimantha, Varuna, Haridra, Chitraka, Putika, Rohisha, Paribhadra and Kurabaka etc.
- Abhyanga (oleation) - It should be done with oil prepared from Priyangu, Lochana,Tagara, Jatamansi, Sariva, Madhuka, Ela and Bhunimba etc.
- Bali and Snanam (Oblation and bath): Oblation and bathing is being administered by Tila, Tandula, Mudga, Mamsa, Matsya etc.
- Dhupana (fumigation): Fumigation has been advocated by Sarpa-Kubusa, Gridhra-Mala, Gaja-Nakha, Ushtra-Roma etc.

Internal use

- Kwatha (decoction) - It should be prepared from Bimbi, Gambhari, Madhuka, Kulattha, Badari, Yava, Laghu- Panchamula.
- Churna (powder) - It should be prepared From Kharjura, Mustaka, Narikela, Kasha, Mridvika, Madhuka etc.
- Ras ausadhies – Kumar Kalayana Rasa, Jayamangalarasa, Rajamriganka Rasa etc.
- Oil- Mahamasha Oil, Kshirabala Oil, Prasarini Oil, Jyotishmati Oil etc.
- Ghrita- Balgrahanasaka ghrita, Balahitakari ghrita, Astamangala ghritae12


DISCUSSION

One of the important portion of Ayurvedic texts which is Bala Grahas, their impact an over all states of children need proper explanation but have comparative clinical importance. In ancient period there was no advanced technology for the diagnosis, equipments for treatment and multispecialty setup of hospitals, Although ancient people described details and accurate description of multiple syndromes and group of diseases of multi systemic origin. Now modern terminologies are more specific and specified causative organism of diseases. Modern lab techniques are more useful to visualize microbes and nomenclate that microbes (virus, bacteria) etc.

CONCLUSION:

On the basis of above description it is clear that Bala graha are now compared with various microbial infections which can be treated with a combined approach of therapeutic and psychiatric management. Thus, this arise the importance of cleanliness and hygienic measures to adopt in routine practice. Hence hygiene in terms of Shuchi and Shuddhi (asepsis and Antisepsis) plays a major role to prevent and cure Graharogas.

Pregnant woman and child is to be kept clean, well fumigated by various protective measures prescribed for child and puerperal woman are actually measures to prevent infection. Balagraha may require further modification in future.

REFERENCES:


