

CLINICAL APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF *BALAGRAHA* – A REVIEW ARTICLE

¹Nandeshwar KiranPrakash

²Prashant L. Patil

³Minakshi C. Choudhari

¹P.G. Scholar, Department of *Kaumarbhritya*, Government Ayurved College, Nanded/MUHS Nashik, Maharashtra, India

²Professor, Department of *Kaumarbhritya*, Government Ayurved College, Nanded /MUHS Nashik, Maharashtra, India.

³P. G.Scholar, Department of *Kaumarbhritya*, Government Ayurved College, Nanded/MUHS Nashik, Maharashtra, India.

ABSTRACT

A unique concept regarding disease caused by unidentified vectors known as *Balagraha*. It is described in *kaumarbhritya* which is a branch of *Astanga Ayurveda*. In today's era, unfortunately *balagraha* is abandoned, due to its mythological explanation which kept evidences far away from scientific justification. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to understand *balagraha* on modern parameters as well as its clinical application in day to day practice. After complete 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.

Keywords: *Kaumarbhritya*, *Astanga Ayurveda*, *Balagrasas*, Infectious diseases.

INTRODUCTION: *Balgraha* affects a large number of neonate and paediatric age group. They have separate entity from other general disorders. Their aetiopathogenesis, clinical features, complications and treatment is entirely different to routine diseases of children and progress in human body is very rapid with high morbidity rate. *Grahas* are most dangerous and alter the life of affected children. Diseases caused by unidentified factors are termed as idiopathic in modern science but *balagraha*, *jataharinis*, *adibalpravritta*, and *janmabalpravritta* etc disorders. *Balagraha* is a result of sins of previous birth and a result of bad deeds, in our daily life. *Vedas* and *Samhitas* are our oldest sources of knowledge or oldest literature available in world and diseases caused by *grahas* mentioned there. First reference is seen in *Rig-veda* as *bhutas* menacing foetus and neonate.^[1] *Balagrasas* are described to be created long back by

lord shiva for the protection of Kartikeya, five of masculine form and seven of feminine form. *Skanda*, *Vishakha*, *Meshakhya*, *Svagraha*, *pitrugraha*, *Shakuni*, *Putana*, *Sheetaputana*, *Adrishtaputana*, *Mukhamandika*, *Revati* and *Sushkarevati* are the names of *grahas*. The first five are males and remaining are females. *AcharyaVaghata* describes the general features of these *balgrahas*, the clinical features of individual *grahas*, etiology and treatment in details.^[2] Significant contribution was given by *Agnipurana* which explains 38 *grahas* attacking in foetal life, infancy and paediatric age group are explained. *Jataharini* mentioned by *Kashyapa* might have been derived from the above source.^[3] *Balagraha* is a combination of two words *bala* + *graha*. *Bala* means children while 'graha' means to grasp or seize. *Grahas* – a class of evil demons supposed to capture or affect the children and produced various clinical

features. *Skandagraha* produced by lord Shiva, *SkandaApasmara* by agni, *Naigamesa* by Parvati and *Mukhamandika and Putana* by Kartikeya.^[4] *Grahas* are invisible and correlate microbes. Their contact result into sporadic diseases of infective in origin. Therefore the entire world of microbes damaging or being helpful to the human being on contact is considered as *grahas*. *AcharyaKashyapa* has described morphology, habitat and characters of *grahas* in *RevatiKalpadhyaya*.^[5] *Grahas* are visible only to divine vision i.e. microscope. Their leaders are fond of *rakta*, *mamsa* and *ojas*. These are night wanderers. They dwell at water tanks(*sheetputana*), ruined houses(*putana*), cow-sheds(*Mukhamandika*) and bases of the trees(*pitrighraha*). *Jataharini* described by *Kashyapa* attacks pregnant women and foetus is highly contagious. They affect breast milk of *dhatri* too.

AYURVEDIC REVIEW: *Sushruta* mentioned in his *samhita* that wounds are to be protected from *grahas* and a neonate should be protected like a wounded person. Microscopic morphology, survival in unhygienic atmosphere, indefinite in numbers, more sustenance in darkness and low temperature when person's BMR also remains low ,blood medium as positive culture all these descriptions of virus and bacteria indicates that *grahas* are not other than these micro-organisms. *CharakSamhita* has described only one *graha* i.e. *Deva* which cause various disorders, appear with indifferent etiology with typical clinical features without any *doshadushti*.^[6] *Sushruta* had given detail description of different aspect of *grahas* , including its predisposing factors, mode of action, manifestation and management of *grahas*. These are nine in number, and

named as – *Skanda*, *Skanda-apasmara*, *Shakuni*, *Revati*, *Putana*, *Andhputana*, *Shitaputana*, *Mukhamandika*, and *Naigmesa*.^[7] *Vagbhata* has described twelve *grahas* above nine as *Sushruta + Swagraha*, *Pitrighraha* and *Sushkarevati*. These are classified as five male and seven female *grahas*.(gram +ve gram -ve microbes). Male- *Skanda*, *Vishakha*, *Mesh*, *Swagraha*, *Pitrighraha*. Female- *Shakuni*, *Putana*, *Shitaputana*, *Andhputana*, *Mukhamandika*, *Revati*, *ShushkaRevati*.^[8] References of *balagrasas* are scattered at many places in *KashyapaSamhita*. First is in *Sutrasthana* where vitiation of breast milk of *dhatri* done by *grahas* e.g. *Shakuni*, *Skanda*, *Shasti* and *Putana*(which is speciality of *Kashyapa*). Children can suffer from various diseases by consumption of such affected milk. Description is incomplete due to vanishing of manuscript.^[9] Second is in *Indriyasthana* where *acharya* mention symptoms of children affected by various *grahas* like *Skanda*, *Skandapasmara*, *Pitrighraha*, *Pundarika*, *Revati*, *Shushkarevati*, *Shakuni*, *Mukhamandika*, *Putana* and *Naigmesa*.^[10] Last reference is seen in *Chikitsa sthana* where treatment of children affected by *Revati*, *Putana*, *Andhputana*, *Shitaputana*, *Kataputana*, *Mukhamandik* *grahas*.^[11] *AcharyaKashyapa* described twenty names of *Revati* and five names *Putanagraha*.^[12] *Jataharini* described in *KashyapaSamhita* came from *Vedas- Rigveda* and *Atharvaveda* here various *krimis* and demons described who affects foetus and neonate.^[13] Twelve *balagrasas* mentioned in *Kumara-Tantra* written by *Ravana*.^[14] *Harita* has described only one *graham* *Strigraha* i.e. *Putana*, with its eight types, *Lohita*, *Revati*, *Vyasi*, *Kumari*, *Shakuni*, *Siva*, *Urdhvakesi* and *Sena*.^[15]

AETIOPATHOGENESIS OF BALAGRAHA: The diseases produced by *grahas* are not due to imbalance of *doshas* but are external in nature. The *grahas* are the disorders caused by evils and demons which may be infectious in origin. *Acharya Kashyapa* clearly mentioned in his *Samhita* that *grahas* can be seen by divine eyes only i.e. microscope, thus these *grahas* are resembles to micro-organisms like virus, bacteria,etc. Children are dependent on others; they are unable to maintain proper hygiene by themselves. Children are immunodeficient therefore more susceptible to infections thus they are mostly affected by *grahas*. *Sushruta* has described entry of *grahas* in the body of children. He said that *grahas* enter in the body unobserved like an image in a mirror or heat of sunrays by a lens or like the soul entering in the body.^[16] *Sushruta* described that the reason of *grahas* are disobeying of rules and regulation of lifestyles of child and mothers such as feeding in unclean and broken vessel with unhealthy conditions of surrounding environment. These cause decrease in immunity of child which can easily invite the infection of microbes. Excessive satisfaction of child's *dhatri*(wet nurse) or mother in eating ,sleep, exercise, sex, harmful activities and unreligious conducts can cause symptoms of *grahas*. Psychological aspect of children i.e. misbehaving in front of priest, disrespect of saints, teachers, and guest also cause *bala-grahas*. *Acharya Vaghbhatta* has described that the colonies of *grahas* are innumerable which wander around the world in various shapes and sizes to attack people for three purposes viz abuse , to battle sexual urges and worship.^[17] First purpose illustrate its pathogenic nature and creates a disease, second microbes enter in the body to complete their life cycle and

create a disease , third one explain using host by microbes to get their nutrition and non-pathogenic may contribute for anabolism. Therefore the scope of *grahas* resembles to virus, bacteria, fungi, parasites to the extent of mites etc. Hence hygiene in terms of *shuchi* and *shuddhi* (asepsis and antisepsis) plays important role to prevent and cure *balagrasas*.

PRODROMAL SYMPTOMS: In various text books of *Ayurveda*, weeping and fever are only two prodromal symptoms of *grahas* are mentioned.^[18]

GENERAL SYMPTOMS: Children affecting of *balagrasas* has symptoms may depend upon the infliction of particular *grahas* , they classified as follows.^[19,20]

- **General Symptoms:** Fever, yawning, excessive crying , irritability, excessive lacrimation, rub his eyes, clench teeth, clench fist, eyes become red, ears and nose miserable look, injures himself and mother with nails and teeth refusal to take feed.

- **Respiratory system:** Grunting respiration, hiccup, cough etc.

- **Gastro-intestinal system:** Vomiting, diarrhoea , distension , constipation , stomatitis.

- **Central nervous system:**

- (a) **Psychological:** Laugh without any reason , fear, pulls his hairs.

- (b) **Organic:** Jerky movement of head , tremors , defective posture, twitching of eyelids and face muscles, drowsiness, giddiness, unconsciousness, vacant stares, dribbling of saliva (due to facial palsy) incontinence in urine and stool, fainting, hypotonia, rolling of eyes etc.

- **Skin:** Blister, urticaria , prominent vein over abdomen , change of colour of skin,etc.

- **Smell of body:** The may emit fishy, bed bug like, fleshy or bloody like etc, smell

according to influence of particular *grahas*.

MANAGEMENT OF *BALA GRAHAS*:

As it is universally proved that “Prevention is better than cure” the general line of management as mentioned earlier holds good for all *balagrahas* by giving first priority to absolute hygiene and immunity instead of symptomatic management. Various herbal combinations and ancient classic karmas like *Pradeha*, *Parisecana*, *Abhyanga*, *Bali*, *Snana*, *Dhupana* and *Dharana* are using for treatment of *balagrahas* now a days.^[21] Some physicians also applying their own strategies from out of generalised drugs. Some oral and topical medicines also used. Pure herbal medicines or pure mineral medicines (*rasa aushadies*) and even herb-mineral combination can be used judiciously as per clinical picture, i.e. system involved, site of lesion, severity of pathology and complications occur^[22] etc.

Skandagraha –

vatashamakdravya, gayatrimantra

Skandapasmari –

kaphashamakdravya, dashamul,

Swagraha – shatavari, sariva siddha taila

Pitrugraha – bath with kshirvruksha mula

kashaya Shakuni –

kashayaraspradhandravya Putna –

kakolyadimadhuraushadha, bali, ghrita

pana

Mukhamandika – vatashamak chikitsa

Shushkarevati – same as skandagraha

Some essential medicines are mentioned below for various *balagrahas*.

External use:

• ***Abhyanga (oleation):*** It should be done with oil prepared from *Lochana*, *Tagara*, *Jatamas*, *Priyangu*, *Savira*, *Madhuka*, *Ela* and *Bhunimbha* etc

• ***Parisheka (washing):*** It should be done with decoction prepared from *Varuna*, *Haridra*, *Agnimantha*, *Chitraka*, *Rohisha*, *Putika*, *Paribhadra*, and *Kurubhaka* etc.

• ***Dhupana (fumigation):*** Fumigation has been advocated by *Sarpa-Kubusa*, *Gaja-Naka*, *Gridhra-Mala*, *Ushtra-Roma* etc.

• ***Bali and Snanam (oblation and bath):*** Oblation and bathing being administered by *Tandula*, *Mudga*, *Tila*, *Mamsa*, *Matsya* etc.

Internal use:

• ***Churna (powder):*** It should be prepared from *Kasha*, *Mridvika*, *Madhuka*, *Kharjura*, *Mushtka*, *Narikela* etc.

• ***Kwatha (decoction):*** It should be prepared from *Badhari*, *Yava*, *Laghupanchamula*, *Bimbi*, *Gambhari*, *Kulattha* .

• ***Oil:*** *Kshirbhala Oil*, *Mahamasha Oil*, *Prasarini Oil*, *Jyotishmati Oil* etc.

• ***Ghrita:*** *Balgrahanasakaghrita*, *Balahitakarighrita*, *Ashamangalaghrita*^[23] etc.

• ***Rasaushadhiess:*** *Jayamangalarasa*, *RajamrigankaRasa*, *Kumar Kalyana Rasa* etc.

DISCUSSION: One of the most controversial but important portion of Ayurveda is *Bala-grahas*. It is a matter of pride that our heritage knowledge has been now-a-days accepted and supported by modern team because after discussing all these to modern paediatrician it is observed that they are surprised to see so detailed and accurate description of various disorders of multiple systemic origin, further they appreciated the views, symptomatology, treatment before 15 B.C. when there was no equipment for diagnosis, advanced technology of management, multispeciality hospitals. *Bala-grahas* impact on all over nation of children need proper explanation but have

comparative clinical importance. Though aetiopathogenesis, general symptoms of *balagrahas* has now been felt as fake among scholars but really they are explained in an applied clinical manner. The treatment explained here is still of broad spectrum and may be effective with certain mythological approaches.

CONCLUSION: On the basis of all above description of *bala-grahas* it is clear that *balagrahas* are now resemble to various microbial infection e.g virus, bacteria, fungus,etc. which can treated with both therapeutic and psychiatric approach. As *balagrahas* caused by uncleanliness and unhygienic atmosphere, it is important to adopt cleanliness and hygienic measures in routine practice. The place of pregnant women,mother and child is to be kept clean. Fumigated by various protective measures. Prevent child and mother from various infections. Some small effort done here to correlate *balagrahas* clinically but it may require further modification in future life.

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Corresponding Author: Dr.Nandeshwar Kiran Prakash, P.G. Scholar, Department of *Kaumarbhritya*, Government Ayurved College, Nanded/MUHS Nashik, Maharashtra, India
Email: kirannandeshwar12@gmail.com

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