

AYURVEDIC VIEW ON CLINICAL IMPORTANCE OF BALA AND BALA PARĪKSHĀ – A REVIEW

¹Shanker Lal Burdak

²Shreeram Kumawat

³Nisha Gupta

¹ PG Scholar, P.G. Dept. of Basic Principles, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur-302002

² PG Scholar, P.G. Dept. of Basic Principles, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur-302002

³ Assistant Professor, P.G. Dept. of Basic Principles, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur-302002

ABSTRACT:

Bala is considered as the physical and mental strength of the individual. It can be assessed in healthy as well as diseased individual. It is helpful in assessing the severity of the disease. The knowledge of *bala* of a patient is needed to know about the prognosis of the disease and to fix the dosage of drugs, to adopt proper treatment modality and to advice proper regimens for a healthy life style. *Bala* is widely described in *Āyurvedic* texts in different-different contexts. Among the explanation given are, *bala* is one which prevents the disease (*roga*), one which is *adhiṣṭhāna* of *ārogya* and treatment is given for protecting it. Thus assessment of *bala* of an individual is important. It cannot be assessed solely on basis of parameters alone like body built, as it has explanation in different contexts like, role of *ojas* in *bala*, assessment of *prākṛta kapha* as *bala*, assessment of *śārīrika*, *mānasika* and *vyādhikṣamatva bala*. There are different methods available for assessing *bala*, so in this study an attempt is being made to collect references regarding to concepts of *bala* and suggest an appropriate method for assessment of *bala*.

Key Words :*Ojas, Vyādhikṣamatva, Arddha vyāyāmaśakti, Bala, Bala parīkṣā*

NEED FOR STUDY: There are various concepts of *bala* in *Ayurveda*. It is so important for the health and treatment of an individual. So, there is a necessity to understand the concept of *bala parīkṣā* in patients and healthy individuals. *Caraka*, *Suśruta* and *Vāgbhaṭṭa* have explained about concepts of *bala*. The present review was done in order to collect the concept of *bala*, its *parīkṣā* and its implication in management of disease.

MATERIALS & METHODS: A thorough search was done in *Carakasaṃhitā*, *Suśrutasaṃhitā*, and *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya* and the available commentary on it and the contents and references were analyzed and used for the study.

Various concepts of *bala* in *Āyurveda*

***Ojas* as *bala*:** *Ācārya Suśruta* mentions that the essence of all *dhātu* beginning with *Rasa* to *śukra* is *Ojas* and that *Ojas* is said to be *bala*. [1] *Dalhāṇa* has commented on this as *Ojas* is the

cause for predominance of *bala* to *sampūrṇa śārīra* (whole body). [2] *Vāgbhaṭṭa* supports this by mentioning that *ojovṛddhi* leads to *tuṣṭi*, *puṣṭi* and *bala*. [3] *Ācārya Caraka* says that normalcy of *Kapha* is said to be *bala* and it is considered to be *ojas*. *Vitiated kapha* is *mala* and it causes disease. [4] *Suśruta* also mentions *prākṛta karma* of *ojas* as, stability, growth of muscles, ability to perform all the activities without any hindrance or obstruction, clarity of voice, brightness or complexion. [5]

***Śārīriaka bala*:** *Caraka* explains regarding *daśavidha bala parīkṣā*, which is a combination of *rogī parīkṣā* and *roga parīkṣā*. *Prakṛtyādi* nine of them except *vikṛtiḥ* are for *ātura balapramāṇa*. *Vikṛti parīkṣā* is for *vyādhi bala pramāṇa*. [6] *Suśruta* mentions about *sthūla*, *kṛṣa* and *madhyam śārīra*, among them *madhyam śārīra* is considered *balavāna*. One who consumes food which is not excessive

unctuous and dry, digested *annarasa* circulates all over the body and nourishes all *dhātu* equally, due to this the person is said to be *balavāna*. He is having good ability to perform the physical activities; he can tolerate hunger, thirst, cold, heat, pain, sunlight. He is said to be *balavāna*. [7] *Caraka* explains about *sama samhat puruṣa*, that one whose *śarīra māṁsa* and *śarīra samhanana* are even in measurement, whose *indriyas* are stable, devoid of *vikāra* due to good *bala*, who can tolerate hunger, thirst, heat, cold, increased body activities, whose *jātharāgni* and digestion are good. [8] This can be considered as strength attained by proper food intake, the physical abilities and proper sensory perception.

Mānasika bala : One among the *daśavidha bala parīkṣā* is *sattva parīkṣā* which can be considered as mental strength. It is of three type *pravara*, *madhyam* and *avara* respectively. [9]

Vyādhikṣamatva bala : *Caraka* explains regarding *vyādhikṣamatva* as, all people will not have similar *vyādhikṣamatva*. This is considered as ones immune power. It varies from person to person. *Cakrapāṇidatta* comments that it is the one which protects the body from disease and prevents from reoccurrence of disease. *Caraka* explains about *vyādhi asahya puruṣa* as, one who is *atisthūla*, *atikṛṣṇa*, whose *māṁsa*, *śoṇita* and *asthi dhātu* are not well formed, who is *durbala*, who consume *asātmyāhāra*, who consume less quantity of *āhāra* and who is *alpa-sattva*, these persons will not have *vyādhikṣamatva*. The persons opposite to these features possess *vyādhikṣamatva*. [10]

Types of bala: *Bala* is of 3 types – *sahaja*, *kālaja* and *yuktikṛtaja bala*.

Sahaja bala : The *śārīrika* and *mānasika bala* which is attained due to *mātrja* and *pitrja bhāva* like *rasa rakta vīrya ojas* is *sahaja bala*, which

can be considered as strength attained from hereditary.

Kālaja bala: Which is attained from impact of *ṛtu* and other factors which is attained in different *vaya*. In *ādāna kāla* the *bala* of individual will be less and in *visarga kāla* it will be more. The *bala* will be *alpa*, *uttama* and *alpa* in child, young and old age respectively.

Yuktikṛtaja bala: *Bala* which is acquired by food and nutrition and physical activities known as *yuktikṛtaja bala*. [11]

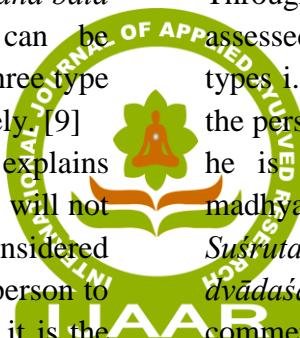
Method of bala parīkṣā: *Caraka* while explaining the *parīkṣā* by *anumāna pramāṇa* mentions that *Bala* should be assessed by *vyāyāmaśakti*. [12] *Vyāyāma* means performing different body movement i.e. *ceṣṭā*. [13] Through ones *vyāyāmaśakti*, *karmaśakti* can be assessed and it can be classified under three types i.e. *pravara*, *madhyam* and *avara bala*. If the person can perform more physical work then he is of *pravara bala*, if moderately then *madhyam bala* and if less then *avara bala*. [14] *Sūṣrata* explains that *bala* is one among *dvādaśa parīkṣā*. The physician before commencing treatment, should first examine *āyu*, than *vyādhi*, *ṛtu*, *agni*, *vaya*, *deha*, *bala*, *sattva*, *sātmya*, *prakṛti*, *bheṣaja* and *deśa* should be examined. [15] *Vāgbhaṭṭa* explains that physician should examine ten factors such as *dusya*, *deśa*, *bala*, *kāla*, *anala*, *prakṛti*, *vaya*, *sattva*, *sātmya* and *āhāra*. [16]

The bala can be assessed by daśavidha ātura bala parīkṣā as follows:

Prakṛti:- If the person is of *vāta prakṛti* then he is having *alpabala*, of *Pitta prakṛti* then *madhyam bala* and of *Kapha prakṛti* then *balavāna*.

Vikṛti:- Here the *roga* is assessed through *doṣa*, *dusya*, *kāla*, *bala*.

Sāra: To know the *bala* of *puruṣa*, *aṣṭavidha sāra* are explained. If the person is of *rakta sāra*



then he is having *anātibala*, if the person is of *māṁsa*, *majjā* and *śukra sāra* then he is *balavanta* and if the person is of *Sarva sara* then he is *atibala*.

Samhanana: The compactness is explained as well demarcated bones, well bound joints and well formed muscles and blood. If a person's compactness is good then he is *balavāna*, if not, *alpabala* and if his compactness is moderate then he is of *madhyam bala*.

Pramānataḥ: It's measured by one's own *aṅgulī pramāṇa*. The person with proper measurement of the body are endowed with longevity, strength, immunity, happiness, supremacy, wealth and other desired qualities. The body with less or more measurement has qualities contrary to this.

Sātmyataḥ: If the person is *sarvarasa sātmya* then he is *balavāna*, if the person is *Eka rasa sātmya* then he is of *alpabala* and if *madhyam rasa sātmya* then *madhyam bala*.

Sattvataḥ: Here *sattva* means *mano bala*. It is of three types. The person with *pravara sattva* possesses *pravara dhī, dhṛti* and *smṛti*, he will be able to bear stronger therapies, can tolerate severe *nija* and *āgantuja roga*, adopts same sort of feelings towards happiness or sorrow, will be under control by themselves and predominant of *sattva guna*. The person with *madhyam sattva* will be of *madhyam dhī, dhṛti* and *smṛti*, he will be able to bear stronger therapies, predominant of *rajoguṇa*, tolerates when controlled by others, with much difficulties tolerates severe *nija* and *āgantuja roga*, he tolerates and adjust to pain or odd situations. Persons with *avara sattva* will have *avara dhī, dhṛti* and *smṛti*. They cannot sustain mental stress, in spite of having good physic they are susceptible to fear, grief, greed and delusion. If they hear frightening narratives or on the look of animal or human flesh or blood, get afflicted with anxiety,

fainting or even succumb to death. These people are contra indicated for *samśodhana* therapy, they cannot tolerate pain, and they are predominant in *tamoguna*.

Āhāraśakti: This is examined by the power of ingestion as well as digestion. Strength and life depend on *āhāraśakti*.

Vyāyāmaśakti: If the person can perform more physical work then he is of *pravara bala*, if moderately then *madhyam bala* and if less then *avara bala*.

Vayaśakti: *Bālāvasthā* up to 16 yrs are *alpa bala*, *Madhyamāvasthā* 16 to 60 yrs are *uttama bala* and *Jīrṇāvasthā* 60 to 100 yrs are *alpa bala*. [17]

Balārdha lakṣaṇa: It is told that *bala* should be examined through *vyāyāmaśakti*. But up to what extent one should perform *vyāyāma* is not mentioned. So here the reference of *samyak vyāyāma lakṣaṇa* and *balārdha lakṣaṇa* or *ardha vyāyāmaśakti* can be adopted. After appearance of these symptoms one should stop performing the *vyāyāma*. The *lakṣaṇa* are appearance of sweat over forehead, axillary region, nose, hands, foot, joints and *mukhaśodhana*, increased respiratory rate, lightness of the body, increased heart rate.^{18, 19} Methods available in modern science at present day are:

Harvard step test: The individual should step up and down off a gym bench for 5 minutes at a rate 30 steps/minute. The pulse is measured every one minute after finishing the test. Pulse1, pulse 2 and pulse 3 are recorded and it is calculated in this formula.

Result = $30000 \div (\text{pulse1} + \text{pulse2} + \text{pulse3})$

Handgrip strength test: The individual holds the handgrip dynamometer in the hand, with the arm at right angles and the elbow by the side of the body. Squeeze the dynamometer with maximum isometric effort, which is maintained



for about 5 seconds. Result is recorded in kilograms.

Push up Test: To do this, the individual should kneel on the floor, hands on either side of the chest and keep the back straight. Do as many pushups as possible until exhaustion. The total number of pushups performed is counted.

Bruce Protocol Stress Test: The individual is made to run on a tread mill. At three minute intervals the incline of the treadmill increases by 2% and the speed increases. The test score is the time taken on the test, in minutes.²⁰

Clinical implication: For *balavāna rogi* the given treatment yields better result and the prognosis is good. If *rogi* is *durbala*, the treatment may not yield better results and the prognosis may be bad.

To understand the prognosis of disease like in *rājayakṣmā* if patient's *bala* and *māṃsa* is *ksīṇa* then the disease will turn into *asādhyā* and if the *bala* and *māṃsa* is *akṣīṇa*, the disease is *sādhyā*. To decide the nature and potency of the drug, assessing the *bala* is helpful. Administration of *tīkṣṇa vīrya auṣadhi* to a *durbala* person leads to *śārīrahāni* and *hīnavīrya auṣadhi* to a *sabala* person leads to reduced action of drug. The dosage of drug can be fixed on *pravara*, *madhyam* and *avara bala* respectively to avoid *upadrava*. If *sāṁśodhana auṣadhi* administered to a *durbala rogi*, it may lead to *atidoṣakṣaya* which intern leads to *atidaurbalya*. So assess the *bala* of patient before *śodhana*. As *mano* and *śārīrika bala* are *uttama* in *guruvyādhita*, physician may get confused as *laghuvyādhita*. Similarly, *mano* and *śārīrika bala* are *hīna* in *laghuvyādhita*, physician may get confused as *guruvyādhita*.

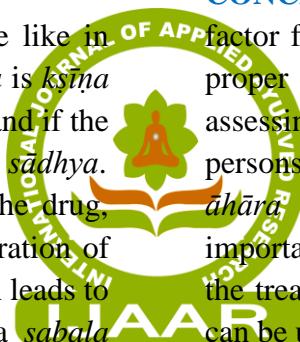
DISCUSSION: As *bala* is assessed by *vyāyāmaśakti*, it can be considered as *śārīrika bala*. *Sattva* is considered as *mānasika bala*. The concept of *ojas* and its *karma* can be

considered as *vyādhikṣamatva bala*. So *bala* can be assessed in three ways i.e. physically, mentally and immunologically. For assessing the *mānasika bala*, *pravara*, *madhyam* and *avara sattva* qualities are assessed. For assessing *vyādhikṣamatva bala*, the *lakṣaṇa* of *vyādhī asaha puruṣa*, *sahaja bala*, *kālaja bala*, *yuktikṛtaja bala* and *ojo bala* should be evaluated. For assessing the *śārīrika bala*, different *vyāyāma* such as *tulābhramana* *gunākarṣaṇa* *dhanurakarṣaṇa* are explained in the texts. Similarly in modern aspect, different methods such as Harvard step test, Bruce protocol stress test, Push up test, Hand grip test are explained. These methods can be adapted to assess the physical strength.

CONCLUSION: *Bala parīkṣā* is an important factor for ascertaining *rogi bala*, prognosis and proper treatment. It is an important factor for assessing the fitness levels of apparently healthy persons. It can be improved by adopting proper *āhāra* and *vihāra*. Physician should give importance to *bala parīkṣā* before commencing the treatment. Different tests in modern science can be used to assess the physical strength.

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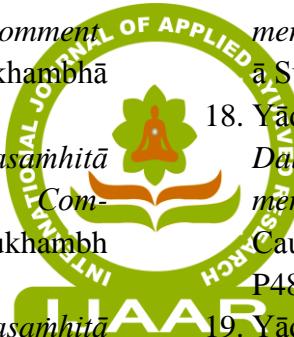
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Corresponding Author : Dr. Shanker Lal Burdak, PG Scholar, P.G. Dept. of Basic Principles, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur-302002
Email id - drs1lburdak007@gmail.com

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