

1 Understanding Balgraha in Ayurveda and Its Clinical Relevance: A Review

2

3 Abstract

4 Kaumarbhritya is an important branch of ayurveda, one of the eight branches of Ayurveda
5 dealing with child health. The term *Balgraha* refers to certain pathological conditions
6 affecting children, traditionally attributed to the influence of invisible entities or *grahas*.
7 Classical Ayurvedic texts have described various types of Balgraha along with their specific
8 signs, symptoms and therapeutic approaches. Classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka
9 Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Kashyapa Samhita have described various types of Balgraha
10 along with their specific signs, symptoms and therapeutic approaches. These conditions
11 predominantly affect infants and young children due to their immature immunity (*Alpa Bala*),
12 improper hygiene, nutritional deficiencies and environmental factors.

13 From a modern perspective, many manifestations of Balgraha can be correlated with pediatric
14 infections, neurological disorders, psychological disturbances and developmental
15 abnormalities. Ayurveda emphasizes preventive measures such as proper antenatal care,
16 hygienic practices, protective rituals, and strengthening of immunity through appropriate diet
17 and medications. Management of Balgraha includes *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* (spiritual
18 therapies), *Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa* (rational therapies) and *Satvavajaya Chikitsa*
19 (psychological management). Various herbal formulations, fumigation (*Dhoopana*),
20 protective amulets and purification procedures are also recommended in classical texts.

21 Thus, the concept of Balgraha reflects the ancient understanding of pediatric diseases and
22 their holistic management. Studying Balgraha from an Ayurvedic perspective helps in
23 understanding traditional pediatric healthcare and provides insights into preventive and
24 therapeutic approaches for childhood disorders.

25 Keywords

26 Balgraha, Kaumarbhritya, Ayurveda, Pediatric Disorders, GrahaRoga, Child Health,
27 Kashyapa Samhita.

28

29 Introduction

30 Ayurveda, the ancient system of medicine, gives special importance to the health and
31 wellbeing of children under the branch Kaumarbhritya, which is one among the *Ashtanga*
32 *Ayurveda*. It deals with the care of the fetus, newborn, infants and children, including
33 prevention and management of pediatric diseases. Among the various childhood disorders

34 described in Ayurveda, Balgraha is considered an important group of diseases affecting
35 infants and young children.¹

36 The term *Balgraha* is derived from two words, *Bala* meaning child and *Graha* meaning to
37 seize or afflict . Classical authors have described that children are more susceptible to these
38 conditions due to theirimmatureless immunity (Alpa Bala), incomplete development of body
39 tissues and inability to protect themselves from external factors.³

40 Different types of Balgrahas have been described with specific signs and symptoms such as
41 fever, crying, abnormal movements, refusal of feeding, altered consciousness and behavioral
42 disturbances. These descriptions suggest that the concept of Balgraha may represent various
43 infectious, neurological and psychological disorders occurring in early childhood.⁴ Ayurveda
44 emphasizes both preventive and curative measures for Balgraha.

45

46 **Aim**

- 47 1. To study and review the concept of Balgraha described in classical Ayurvedic texts.
- 48 2. To understandbalgraha and its clinical relevance in pediatric disorders.

49

50 **Methodology**

51 “ग्रहउपदानेधातुः ग्रहणातिग्रहः”

52 ◆ Literal Meaning

- 53 • Graha = that which seizes, captures, or holds.
- 54 • UpadaneDhatuḥ = acts upon or affects the body tissues (Dhatus).
- 55 • Grahanati = to grasp, take control, or seize.

56 A factor that seizes or takes control over the body tissues (Dhatus) is called “Graha.”

57

- 58 • Explanation According to Modern Science

59 In Ayurveda, the concept of “Graha” was described as an unseen or harmful force affecting
60 the body. In modern science, this idea can be understood in the following ways:

- 61 1. Infectious Agents (Microorganisms)

62 Bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc., enter the body and affect tissues (Dhatus)Sapt dhatu)

63 They “seize” or invade cells and cause disease

- 64 • Examples:

- 65 1. Viruses enter host cells and take control of their machinery..(AGE Virals – Putana
66 graha ,URTI/LRTI – Pitrugraha)

67 2. Bacteria release toxins that damage tissues.

68 This invading or controlling action is equivalent to “Graha” (seizing)

69

70 2. Neurological and Psychological Factors

71 Examples:

72 | 1. Epilepsy(Mesha Geaha)

73 | 2. Psychosis

74 | 3. Some Autism spectrum conditions

75 Earlier, these conditions were described as “Graha affliction” because, it appeared as if an
76 external force had taken control of the person.

77 • Modern explanation: Brain dysfunction or neurochemical imbalance.

78

79 | 3. Cellular-Level Interaction-

80 In modern biology: Pathogens bind to receptors on cells.

81 | Toxins affect enzymes or DNA (Polio virus ,GBS -Skanda graha)

82 Thus, “Graha” can be understood as: Any factor that binds to, invades, or alters normal
83 cellular function.

84 4. Environmental and Toxic Factors

85 | Toxins, heavy metals, and pollutants can affect body tissues (ShwaGraha – Rabies) Any
86 biological, psychological, or environmental factor that takes control over body tissues
87 (SaptaDhatus) and disturbs their normal function.

88

89 Detailed Review of Balgraha in Ayurveda

90 **Concept of Balgraha** Balgraha refers to certain disease conditions that affect infants and
91 children, which were traditionally believed to be caused by invisible or supernatural entities
92 called *Grahas*.¹

93 Ancient Ayurvedic scholars described that children are more susceptible to these conditions
94 due to their immature low immunity (Alpa Bala), undeveloped body tissues and weak defense
95 mechanisms. Because of this vulnerability, children can easily get affected by various internal
96 and external factors such as infections, improper nutrition, poor hygiene and environmental
97 influences.²

98 Although Balgraha is described in a mythological or supernatural manner in classical texts,
99 many scholars interpret these descriptions as symbolic representations of pediatric infections,

100 neurological disorders, psychological disturbances and behavioral abnormalities. Thus, the
101 concept of Balgraha reflects the ancient understanding of pediatric pathology.

102

103 **Description of Balgraha in Ayurvedic Classics**

104 Several classical Ayurvedic texts have described Balgraha in detail, especially Kashyapa
105 Samhita, which is considered one of the most important texts for pediatric medicine.

106 **1. Kashyapa Samhita**

107 Kashyapa Samhita describes different types of Balgrahas along with their characteristic
108 symptoms and management methods. Kashyapa Samhita provides detailed descriptions of
109 various Grahas that afflict children. It describes different types of Balgrahas along with their
110 characteristic symptoms and management methods. The text also emphasizes preventive
111 measures, including protection of the child from harmful environmental and supernatural
112 influences.

113 Kashyapa described main 10 balgrahas and their types.

114 **2. Sushruta Samhita**

115 Sushruta Samhita also discusses Graha disorders affecting children and explains the clinical
116 features, causes and treatment methods. It highlights the importance of Raksha Karma
117 (protective measures) to prevent these conditions. Sushruta described total 09 balgrahas.

118 **2. Sushruta Samhita**

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120 features, causes and treatment methods. It highlights the importance of Raksha Karma
121 (protective measures) to prevent these conditions.

122 **3. Charaka Samhita**

123 Although Charaka mainly focuses on general medicine, references to Graha-related disorders
124 are mentioned in relation to psychological and behavioral disturbances, also described
125 Grahonmad.

126 “प्रततंशेदनंबालःस्तनंनाभिनन्दति।

127 निद्रानाशंचकुरुतेस्कन्दग्रहपीडितः॥”

128 A child afflicted by Skanda Graha shows the following features:

129 Continuous crying (persistent, inconsolable crying), refusal to breastfeed, disturbed sleep /
130 insomnia. The infant cries continuously without obvious reason, does not feed properly, and
131 has poor or disturbed sleep.

132 These symptoms can be correlated with the following pediatric conditions:

133 Infantile colic → excessive crying, especially in otherwise healthy babies

134 Feeding difficulties → poor latch, oral issues, or illness.

135

136 **Causes of Balgraha**

137 हिंसारतिअर्चनाकाक्षाग्रहग्रहणकारणम्।”

138

139 हिंसारति (Himsa-rati) → Inclination towards violence or harmful acts.

140 अर्चना (Archana) → Improper or excessive worship/practices.

141 काक्षा (Kanksha) → Desire, jealousy, or strong cravings.

142

143 In Ayurvedic philosophy, this shloka explains the causative factors (Nidana) of Graha
144 affliction:

145 Unethical behavior (violence) disturbs mental and environmental harmony.

146 Improper rituals or practices create imbalance.

147 Strong negative emotions (jealousy, desires) affect subtle psychological states.

148 , These factors are believed to make a child more susceptible to Balagraha disorders.

149 This concept can be interpreted as: Psychosocial stress in family environment
150 , parental behavior affecting child's mental health ,neglect, abuse, or improper caregiving
151 , emotional disturbances impacting infant behavior.

152 An unhealthy emotional and social environment around the child may lead to behavioral and
153 health issues. All these causes reduce sattva guna and increase rajas and tamas guna causing
154 various manas vyadhis.

155

156 • Modern Scientific Correlation-

157 1. Parental Behavior & Environment

158 2. Emotional Neglect

159 3. Socio-economic & Lifestyle Factors

160 4. Stressful Environment

161 This shloka emphasizes that:

162 Balagraha is not only caused by external factors (like infections), but also by psychological,
163 social, and behavioral factors.

164 In nowadays, due to nuclear family childrens need more attention , all above causes disturbs
 165 child nutrition. Along with physical and mental health – these affects on social brhaviour of
 166 child causing behavioural disorders also .

167
168

169 **Types of Balgraha**

170 **Table 1: Number of grahas according to acharyas and it's types-**

| <u>Acharya</u> <u>/text</u> | <u>Total no.</u> <u>of balgraha</u> | <u>Male</u> <u>(purushgraha)</u> | <u>Female</u> <u>(streegraha)</u> |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <u>Charaka</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>3</u> |
| <u>Sushruta</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>4</u> |
| <u>vagbhata</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>4</u> |
| <u>kashyapa</u> | <u>12</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>6</u> |

171

172 Each Graha is described with specific symptoms, behavioral changes and physical
 173 manifestations in the affected child.

174

175

176 **Table 2: Types of Balgraha described in Kashyapa Samhita with correlation with**
 177 **morden diseases and it's clinical features.**

| Sr. No. | Name of Balgraha | Main Features / Symptoms | Correlation with morden disease. |
|----------------|-------------------------|---|---|
| 1 | Skanda Graha | Tights Fists and sweating, Tripod Signs, Painful joints and rigid muscles, Stiffness. Hemiplegia involvement of Spines and Cranial nerves. | Polio Virus, Guillain barre Syndrome |
| 2 | Skandapasmara | High Grade Fever, Pre convulsive State with, typical aural cry. TonicConvulsions, child voids stool and urine , bites tongue. | Febrile Convulsions |
| 3 | Shakuni Graha | Painful, blisters in joints, ulcer are found in throat, tongue and palate. | Impetigo |

| | | | |
|---|--------------|--|---|
| 4 | Revati Graha | Green watery diarrhoea, fever, loss of subcutaneous fats, Anaemia, | Anaemia, B12 deficiency, |
| 5 | Putana Graha | Gastroenteritis, muscles become weak, abdomen distended, hiccup and urine retention. | Hypokalemia (K+) |
| 6 | Andhaputana | Eye disorders, redness and watering of eyes | Chronic Diarrhoea with Involvement of Eyes. |
| 7 | Shitaputana | Diarrhoea with Spasms and Peripheral failure Emits fats Smell, shivering, tremors, anxious face and sluggish movements of intestine. | Hypocalcemia, Hypomagnesemia. |
| 8 | Mukhamandika | Swelling of face, excessive salivation, enlarged liver. | Infantile Cirrhosis |
| 9 | Naigamesha | Uprolling of Eyes, Loose motions, Cough, Distended Abdomen with hiccup, altered Voice insomnia, Recurrent Vomiting, Coma and Convulsions, Stiffness of the body. Emits Goat Smell. | Co related with Convulsions/ Meningitis (Bacterial/ Tubercular) |

178

179 **Prevention of Balgraha**

180 Ayurveda emphasizes preventive measures for protecting children from Balgraha. Important
181 preventive practices include:

- 182 • Maintaining proper hygiene and cleanliness
- 183 • Proper antenatal and postnatal care
- 184 • Protection of infants from infections
- 185 • Use of herbal fumigation (*Dhoopana*)
- 186 • Performing protective rituals (*Raksha Karma*)
- 187 • Strengthening immunity through appropriate diet and medicines

188 These preventive approaches reflect the Ayurvedic emphasis on holistic child care and
189 disease prevention with graha specific medication and management.

190

191 **Management of Balgraha**

192 The treatment of Balgraha in Ayurveda includes three main therapeutic approaches:

193 **1. Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa**

194 This includes spiritual and religious practices such as **mantra chanting, protective rituals,**
195 **wearing amulets and prayers.**

196 **2. Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa**

197 This involves rational therapeutic measures including:

- 198 • Herbal medicines
- 199 • Medicated ghee and oils
- 200 • Panchakarma procedures
- 201 • Fumigation therapy
- 202 • Snana (bath) with medicated herbs

203 **3. Satvavajaya Chikitsa**

204 This approach focuses on psychological management and strengthening the mental stability
205 of the child.

206

207 **Discussion**

208

209 Balgraha is an important concept described in Ayurvedic pediatric science (Kaumarbhritya),
210 which explains various disorders affecting infants and children. The ancient scholars
211 considered that children are more susceptible to such disorders because of their immature
212 body tissues, developing immune system and inability to express their discomfort properly.⁷

213 Kashyapa Samhita describes several types of Balgraha such as Skanda, Skandapasmara,
214 Shakuni, Revati, Putana, Andhaputana, Shitaputana, Mukhamandika and Naigamesha, each
215 having specific signs and symptoms.⁶ For example, *SkandapasmaraGraha* is characterized by
216 convulsions and loss of consciousness, which can be correlated with epileptic disorders or
217 seizure conditions in modern pediatrics. Similarly, *Putana Graha* presents with symptoms
218 like vomiting, diarrhea and weakness, which may represent gastrointestinal infections or
219 neonatal sepsis.⁷

220 The susceptibility of children to Balgraha is also explained through various etiological factors
221 (Nidana) described in Ayurvedic texts. These include poor hygiene, contaminated food,
222 environmental pollution, improper infant care and weak immunity.⁸ Such factors are also
223 recognized in modern medicine as important causes of paediatric infections and illnesses.

224 Therefore, the classical concept of Balagraha may represent an early attempt to understand the
225 role of environmental and infectious agents in childhood diseases.

226 Ayurveda emphasizes both preventive and curative approaches in the management of
227 Balagraha. Preventive measures include proper antenatal and postnatal care, maintaining
228 hygiene, protecting the child from infections and performing *Raksha karma* for safeguarding
229 the child.⁹The use of Dhoopana (medicated fumigation) is also described to purify the
230 environment and prevent disease-causing agents. From a modern perspective, fumigation and
231 hygienic practices may help in reducing microbial contamination in the surroundings.¹⁰

232 The management of Balagraha is mainly based on three therapeutic approaches described in
233 Ayurveda.

234 Many scholars believe that the concept of Balagraha reflects the holistic approach of Ayurveda
235 toward pediatric health, where physical, psychological and environmental factors are all
236 considered important in disease causation and management.¹⁰ Although the classical
237 descriptions attribute these diseases to supernatural entities, modern interpretation suggests
238 that they may correspond to several pediatric conditions such as epilepsy, infections,
239 developmental disorders and behavioural disturbances.

240 Thus, the concept of Balagraha demonstrates the profound observational skills of ancient
241 Ayurvedic scholars in identifying complex paediatric disorders. Understanding these classical
242 descriptions helps in interpreting traditional knowledge in the light of modern medical
243 science and highlights the importance of preventive child healthcare practices in Ayurveda.

244

245 **Conclusion**

246 The concept of Balagraha originates from ancient Ayurveda, where it was believed that
247 certain unseen forces or entities could affect the physical and mental health of children. These
248 conditions were described in classical texts like the *Kashyapa Samhita*, often presenting
249 symptoms such as fever, behavioural changes, or developmental disturbances.

250 In today's era, however, the understanding of such conditions has evolved significantly.
251 Modern science and Paediatrics interpret these symptoms through the lens of infections,
252 neurological disorders, nutritional deficiencies, and psychological conditions rather than
253 supernatural causes. What was once attributed to Balagraha can now often be diagnosed and
254 treated effectively using evidence-based medicine.

255 That said, the concept still holds cultural and historical importance. In many communities, it
256 reflects early attempts to understand childhood illnesses and emphasizes the need for

257 protection, hygiene, and caregiving. Some Ayurvedic interpretations also symbolically relate
258 Balagraha to imbalances in the body or environmental factors, which can align with modern
259 preventive healthcare principles.

260 In conclusion, while Balagraha as a supernatural explanation is not supported by
261 contemporary science, its underlying observations about child vulnerability remain relevant.
262 Integrating traditional awareness with modern medical knowledge ensures a more holistic
263 approach to child health in today's world.

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