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

### Abstract

Kaumarbhritya is an important branch of ayurveda, one of the eight branches of Ayurveda dealing with child health. The term Balgraha refers to certain pathological conditions affecting children, traditionally attributed to the influence of invisible entities or grahas. Classical Ayurvedic texts have described various types of Balgraha along with their specific signs, symptoms and therapeutic approaches. Classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Kashyapa Samhita have described various types of Balgraha along with their specific signs, symptoms and therapeutic approaches. These conditions predominantly affect infants and young children due to their immature immunity (Alpa Bala), improper hygiene, nutritional deficiencies and environmental factors. From a modern perspective, many manifestations of Balgraha can be correlated with pediatric infections, neurological disorders, psychological disturbances and developmental abnormalities. <sup>9</sup> Ayurveda emphasizes preventive measures such as proper antenatal care, hygienic practices, protective rituals, and strengthening of immunity through appropriate diet and medications. Management of Balgraha includes Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa (spiritual therapies), Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa (rational therapies) and Satvavajaya Chikitsa (psychological management). Various herbal formulations, fumigation (Dhoopana), protective amulets and purification procedures are also recommended in classical texts. Thus, the concept of Balgraha reflects the ancient understanding of pediatric diseases and their holistic management. Studying Balgraha from an Ayurvedic perspective helps in understanding traditional pediatric healthcare and provides insights into preventive and therapeutic approaches for childhood disorders.

### <sup>21</sup> Keywords

Balgraha, Kaumarbhritya, Ayurveda, Pediatric Disorders, Graha Roga, Child Health, Kashyapa Samhita.

## 10 Introduction

Ayurveda, the ancient system of medicine, gives special importance to the health and wellbeing of children under the branch Kaumarbhritya, which is one among the Ashtanga Ayurveda. <sup>1</sup> It deals with the care of the fetus, newborn, infants and children, including prevention and management of pediatric diseases. Among the various childhood disorders described in Ayurveda, Balgraha is considered an important group of diseases affecting infants and young children.<sup>1</sup>

The term Balgraha is derived from two words, Bala meaning child and Graha meaning to seize or afflict. Classical authors have described that <sup>22</sup> children are more susceptible to these conditions due to their immature immunity (Alpa Bala), incomplete development of body tissues and inability to protect themselves from external factors.<sup>3</sup>

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

### Aim

1. To study and review the concept of Balgraha described in classical Ayurvedic texts.
2. To understand balgraha and its clinical relevance in pediatric disorders.

### Methodology

“ग्रह उपदाने धातुः ग्रहणात्ग्रहः”

#### ◆ Literal Meaning

- Graha = that which seizes, captures, or holds.
- Upadane Dhatuḥ = acts upon or affects the body tissues (Dhatu).
- Grahanati = to grasp, take control, or seize.

A factor that seizes or takes control over the body tissues (Dhatu) is called "Graha."

#### □ Explanation According to Modern Science

In Ayurveda, the concept of "Graha" was described as an unseen or harmful force affecting the body. **2 In modern science, this idea can be understood in the** following ways:

##### 1. Infectious Agents (Microorganisms)

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

They "seize" or invade cells and cause disease

#### □ Examples:

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

2. Bacteria release toxins that damage tissues.

This invading or controlling action is equivalent to "Grahan" (seizing)

##### 2. **15** Neurological and Psychological Factors

#### Examples:

1. Epilepsy(Mesha Geaha)

2. Psychosis

3. Some Autism spectrum conditions

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

□ Modern explanation: Brain dysfunction or neurochemical imbalance.

##### 3. Cellular-Level Interaction-

In modern biology: Pathogens bind to receptors on cells.

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

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

#### 4. Environmental and Toxic Factors

Toxins, heavy metals, and pollutants can affect body tissues ( Shwa Graha – Rabies)Any biological, psychological, or environmental factor that takes control over body tissues (Sapta Dhatus) and disturbs their normal function.

#### Detailed Review of Balgraha in Ayurveda

Concept of Balgraha Balgraha refers to certain disease conditions that affect infants and children, which were traditionally <sup>16</sup> believed to be caused by invisible or supernatural entities called Grahas.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ancient Ayurvedic scholars described that children are more susceptible to these conditions due to their immature low immunity (Alpa Bala), undeveloped body tissues and weak defense mechanisms. Because of this vulnerability, children can easily get affected by various internal and external factors such as infections, improper nutrition, poor hygiene and environmental influences.<sup>2</sup>

Although Balgraha is described in a mythological or supernatural manner in classical texts, many scholars interpret these descriptions as symbolic representations of pediatric infections, neurological disorders, psychological disturbances and behavioral abnormalities. Thus, the concept of Balgraha reflects the ancient understanding of pediatric pathology.

#### Description of Balgraha in Ayurvedic Classics

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

##### 1. Kashyapa Samhita

Kashyapa Samhita describes different types of Balgrahas along with their characteristic symptoms and management methods. Kashyapa Samhita provides detailed descriptions of various Grahas that afflict children. It describes different types of Balgrahas along with their characteristic symptoms and management methods. The text also emphasizes preventive

measures, including protection of the child from harmful environmental and supernatural influences.

Kashyapa described main 10 bal grahas and their types.

## 2. Sushruta Samhita

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

## 2. Sushruta Samhita

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## 3. Charaka Samhita

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

“प्रततं रोदनं बालःसूतनं नाभनिन्दति ।  
नदिरानाशं च कुरुते स्कन्दग्रहपीडतिः ॥”

A child afflicted by Skanda Graha shows the following features:

Continuous crying (persistent, inconsolable crying), refusal to breastfeed, disturbed sleep / insomnia. The **6 infant cries continuously without obvious reason, does not** feed properly, and has poor or disturbed sleep.

**7 These symptoms can be correlated with the following** pediatric conditions:

Infantile colic → excessive crying, especially in otherwise healthy babies

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

## Causes of Balgraha

हसिरतर्चिर्चना काक्षा ग्रहग्रहण कारणम्।”

हिसा रति(Himsa-rati) → Inclination towards violence or harmful acts.

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

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

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

Unethical behavior (violence) disturbs mental and environmental harmony.

Improper rituals or practices create imbalance.

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

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

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

An unhealthy emotional and social environment around the child may lead to behavioral and health issues. All these causes reduces satva guna and increase rajas and tamas guna causing various manas vyadhis.

□ Modern Scientific Correlation-

1. Parental Behavior & 23 Environment

2. Emotional Neglect

3. Socio-economic & Lifestyle Factors

4. 17 Stressful Environment

This shloka emphasizes that:

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

In nowadays, due to nuclear family childrens need more attention , all above causes

disturbs child nutrition. Along with 5 physical and mental health – these affects on social

behaviour of child causing behavioural disorders also .

### Types of Balgraha

Table 1: Number of grahas according to acharyas and its types-

- Acharya /text
- Total no. of balgraha
- Male (purush graha)
- Female (stree graha)
- Charaka
- 8
- 5
- 3
- Sushruta
- 9
- 5
- 4
- vaghbhata
- 9
- 9
- 4
- kashyapa
- 12
- 6
- 6

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

Table 2: Types of Balgraha described in Kashyapa Samhita with correlation with modern diseases and its clinical features.

Sr. No.

Name of Balgraha

Main Features / Symptoms

Correlation with modern disease.

3 1

Skanda Graha

Tight 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. Tonic Convulsions, 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<sup>+</sup> )

18 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 hiccough ,altered Voice insomnia, Recurrent Vomiting, Coma and Convulsions, Stiffness of the body.Emits Goat Smell.

Co related with Convulsions/ Meningitis (Bacterial/ Tubercular)

Prevention of Balgraha

Ayurveda emphasizes preventive measures for protecting children from Balgraha.

Important preventive practices include:

- Maintaining proper hygiene and cleanliness

- ❑ Proper antenatal and postnatal care
- ❑ Protection of infants from infections
- ❑ Use of herbal fumigation (Dhoopana)
- ❑ Performing protective rituals (Raksha Karma)
- ❑ Strengthening immunity through appropriate diet and medicines

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

### Management of Balgraha

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

#### 1. Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa

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

#### 2. Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa

This involves rational therapeutic measures including:

- ❑ Herbal medicines
- ❑ Medicated ghee and oils
- ❑ Panchakarma procedures
- ❑ Fumigation therapy
- ❑ Snana (bath) with medicated herbs

#### 3. Satvavajaya Chikitsa

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

### Discussion

Balgraha is an important concept described in Ayurvedic pediatric science (Kaumarbhritya), which explains various disorders affecting infants and children. The

ancient scholars considered that children are more susceptible to such disorders because of their immature body tissues, developing immune system and inability to express their discomfort properly.<sup>7</sup>

Kashyapa Samhita describes several types of Balgraha such as <sup>13</sup> Skanda, Skandapasmara, Shakuni, Revati, Putana, Andhaputana, Shitaputana, Mukhamandika and Naigamesha, each having specific signs and symptoms.<sup>6</sup> For example, Skandapasmara Graha is characterized by convulsions and loss of consciousness, <sup>4</sup> which can be correlated with epileptic disorders or seizure conditions in modern pediatrics. Similarly, Putana Graha presents with symptoms like vomiting, diarrhea and weakness, which may represent gastrointestinal infections or neonatal sepsis.<sup>7</sup>

The susceptibility of children to Balgraha is also explained through various etiological factors (Nidana) described in Ayurvedic texts. <sup>19</sup> These include poor hygiene, contaminated food, environmental pollution, improper infant care and weak immunity.<sup>8</sup> Such factors are also recognized in modern medicine as important causes of paediatric infections and illnesses. Therefore, the classical concept of Balgraha may represent an early attempt to understand the role of environmental and infectious agents in childhood diseases.

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

The management of Balgraha is mainly based on three therapeutic approaches described in Ayurveda.

Many scholars believe that the concept of Balgraha reflects the holistic approach of Ayurveda toward pediatric health, where physical, psychological and environmental factors

are all considered important in disease causation and management.<sup>10</sup> Although the classical descriptions attribute these diseases to supernatural entities, modern interpretation suggests that they may correspond to several pediatric conditions such as epilepsy, infections, developmental disorders and behavioural disturbances.

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

## Conclusion

The concept of Balagraha originates from ancient Ayurveda, where it was believed that certain unseen forces or entities could affect the **5 physical and mental health** of children.

**8** These conditions were described in classical texts like the Kashyapa Samhita, often presenting symptoms such as fever, behavioural changes, or developmental disturbances. In today's **20 era, however, the understanding of such** conditions has evolved significantly.

**14 Modern science and Paediatrics interpret these symptoms** through the lens of infections, neurological disorders, nutritional deficiencies, and psychological conditions rather than supernatural causes. What was once attributed to Balagraha can now often be diagnosed and treated effectively using evidence-based medicine.

That said, the concept still holds cultural and historical importance. In many communities, it reflects early attempts to understand childhood illnesses and emphasizes the need for protection, hygiene, and caregiving. Some Ayurvedic interpretations also symbolically relate Balagraha to imbalances in the body or environmental factors, which can align with modern preventive healthcare principles.

In conclusion, while Balagraha as a supernatural explanation is not supported by contemporary science, its underlying observations about child vulnerability remain relevant. Integrating traditional awareness with modern medical knowledge ensures a more holistic

approach to child health in today's world.

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