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Review Article

A REVIEW ON CLINICAL APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF BALAGRAHA IN MODERN TIMES

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ABSTRACT

Kaumarbhritya is a branch of Astanga 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 in this paper by author 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 various search engines along with Ayurvedic textbooks. After thorough study of the concept of balagraha it is concluded that these unidentified vectors are thought to be microbes which can not be seen by naked eyes but produce group of diseases of multi systemic-origin and syndromes.

Keywords: Kaumarbhritya, Astanga Ayurveda, Balagraha

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. They affect a large number of pediatric age group. Their progress in human body is very rapid with high morbidity rate. In some instance they create danger to the life of affected children. 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 privritta and janam bal privritta etc disorders in our classics are attributed to goddess, sins of previous birth and a result of bad deeds in our daily life. Vedas are our oldest source of knowledge or oldest literatures available in this universe that clearly mention disease caused by graha. First reference is seen in Rig-Veda as bhutas menacing fetus and neonates.¹ Acharya Sayana described the word grahi to be harming the child.² It is said to resemble yakshma^{2,3}, create dark eyes³ and even sleep.⁴ First time Mahabharata explained morphology of the grahas along with their attack up to 16 years age group children. Kaushika sutra and skanda Bhaishajya also mentioned about Graha rogas. Significant contribution was given by Agnipurana which explains 38 Grahas. Grahas attacking in foetal life, infancy and paediatric age group are explained. Markandeya purana explains 16 demons out of which 8 are male and 8 are female. Jataharini mentioned by Kashyapa might have been derived from the

above source. Shatapatha Brahman depicts graha as some mythical power.⁵ Grahas and Atigrahas each eight in number are described in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Balagraha is a combination of two words bala + graha. Bala is pertaining to children while 'Graha' means to seize or grasp. Thus grahas are said to be a class of evil demons supposed to capture or affect the children and produce various clinical features. These grahas come to existence by super natural power i.e. Lord Shiva and Parvati to protect his child Kartikeya from various enemies. Skanda graha is produced by Lord Shiva where as Skanda Apasmara by Agni, Naigamesa by Parvati, and Mukhamandika and Putana by Kartikeya.⁶ What-so-ever may be the case grahas are produced with good intention of protection of child Ganesha from enemies.⁷ These are invisible and correlate microbes. Their contact results into the sporadic cases of infective nature. Therefore the entire world of microbes damaging or being helpful to the human beings on contact could be considered as grahas. In Revati kalpadhyaya, Acharya Kashyapa has described morphology, habitat and characters of grahas⁸

- Grahas are visible only to divine vision i.e microscope.
- Their leaders and servants constituting colonies are innumerable.
- They are fond of rakta, mamsa and ojas.
- These are night wanderers.

- 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 from grahas 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 and low temperature when the individual's BMR also remains low exactly indicates that grahas are no other than, the microorganisms like virus, bacteria etc. Charaka Samhita has direct reference of grahas, however, influence of 'Deva' are supposed to cause various disorders like grahas and appear with indifferent etiology with typical features, without proper correlation with vitiation of doshas.⁹ Sushruta has given much importance of bala grahas and given elaborative account on this aspect, including predisposing factors, mode of seizure, manifestations and management of individual grahas. These are nine in number, and named as – Skanda, Skandapasmarā, Shakuni, Revati, Putana, Andhaputana, Shitaputana, Mukhamandika and Naigamesa.¹⁰ Vagbhatta 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, Meshā, Swagraha, Pitrigraha, while female are seven – Shakuni, Putana, Shitaputana, Andha Putana, Mukhamandika, Revati and Shushka Revati.¹¹ 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, Shashthi and Putana which is the only contribution of Kasyapa however description is incomplete due to extinction of manuscript. On consumption of such milk child can suffer various features of graha.¹² Second reference of balagraha is in Indriya sthan where saint describe symptoms of affected child with various graha like Skanda, Skandapasmarā, Pitriskanda, Pundarika, Revati, Shushkarevati, Shakuni, Mukhamandika, Putana and Naigamesa.¹³ While third or final reference has seen in Chikitsa sthana about treatment of child affected by Revati, Putana, Andhaputana, Shitaputana, Kataputana and Mukharika (Mukhamandika) grahas.¹⁴ Revati has been mentioned with its twenty names;¹⁵ various types of Jataharinis have been described, affecting the growing fetus and neonates. Probably the concept of Jataharini came from Vedas; Rig-Veda and Atharvaveda where in various Krimis and demons have described which were supposed to attack the fetus and neonate. Chakradutt contains full description of 'Kumara – Tantra' of Ravana in which twelve bala grahas are mentioned.¹⁶ Harita has described only one Strigraha – Putana, with its eight types – Lohita, Revati, Vyasi (dvanksi),

Kumari, Shakuni, Siva, Urdhvakesi and Sena.¹⁷ These attack the child on the day, month and year in the same order.

Aetiopathogenesis of Bala – Graha

The disorders produced by influence of Grahas are not primarily due to vitiation of doshas but are external in nature. The grahas are syndromes which are caused by demons and may be infection in nature. Kashyapa opined clearly that these can be seen only by divine eyes (microscope). Thus it is evident that these grahas may be like micro- organisms. 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 like an image in a mirror or heat of sunrays by a lens or like the soul entering the body. Sushruta illustrate number of different causative factor into two major categories.¹⁸ One related 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. Other reason includes excessive indulgence of child's wet nurse or mother in eating, sex, sleep, exercise, harmful activities and other unreligious conducts etc. On the other hand second category is related to psychological aspect of child such as showing misconduct in front of priest, saints, teachers and guest 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. 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. victimize, to combat the sexual urges and worship.¹⁹ First purpose illustrates its pathogenic nature and creates a disease while second purpose illustrate microbes enter in the body to complete their life cycle and create a disease. Third purpose explain using host by microbes to get their nutrition and non pathogenic, may contribute for anabolism. 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 prodromal symptoms which are defined in various textbook of Ayurveda.²⁰

General Symptoms

The symptoms appearing in a child due to affection of bala-graha may depend upon the infliction of that particular graha. In given table various symptoms of Bala grahas are classified.^{21,22}

S. No.	Particulars	Symptoms
1	General Symptoms	Fever, irritability, excessive crying, yawning, shouts, bites lips, clenches teeth, clenches fists, injures himself or the mother with the nails or teeth, refusal to take feeds, emaciation, excessive lacrimation, rubs his eyes, ears and nose miserable look, eyes become red etc.
2.	Central Nervous System	
	(a) Psychological	Fear, pulls his hairs, laughs alone without any reason and becomes cruel.
	(b) Organic	Vacant stare, unconsciousness, drowsiness, giddiness, irritability, hypotonia, rolling of eye-balls, jerky movements of head, twitching of eyelids and facial muscles, tremors, defective posture, dribbling of saliva (due to facial palsy), change in voice and speech, incontinence of urine and stool, fainting, etc.
3.	Gastro-intestinal symptoms	Diarrhea, distension, vomiting, thirst, constipation, stomatitis etc.
4.	Respiratory Symptoms	Cough, hiccup, grunting respiration, etc.
5.	Skin	Change in colour of skin, blisters, urticaria, prominent veins over skin of abdomen, etc.
6.	Smell of body	The child may emit fishy, bed bug like, fleshy or bloody, etc smell according to influence of particular grahas.

Management of Bala grahas

As analyzed earlier the concept of grahas and graha rogas should always be well remembered before making out the management strategy for such disorders. 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. Various herbal combinations and others discriminated in the ancient classics towards Pradeha, Parisheka, Abhyanga, Bali, Snana, Dhupana and Dharana are obsolete now-a-days²³ and differentiation of the drugs as per varying graha rogas is almost out of practice. Even some physicians who execute such measures are also applying their own strategies from out of generalized drugs. Concentration and emphasis is laid down on oral and topical medicines only. Pure herbal medicines or pure mineral medicines (rasa aushadhis) and even herbo-mineral combinations can be selected judiciously as per clinical picture; i.e. System involved, site of lesion, severity of pathology and complications set in etc. whether the stage is acute, sub acute or chronic shall be the main consideration for proper management and selection of medicines. Keeping these factors in view, some essential medicines are mentioned here under for various graha rogas.

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 aushadhis – Kumar Kalayana Rasa, Jayamangalarasa, Rajamriganka Rasa etc.
- Oil- Mahamasha Oil, Kshirabala Oil, Prasarini Oil, Jyotishmati Oil etc.
- Ghrita- Balgrahanasaka ghrita, Balahitakari ghrita, Astamangala ghrita²⁴ etc.

DISCUSSION

One of the most debatable but important portion of Ayurvedic texts which is Bala Grahas, their impact on over all states of children need proper explanation but have comparative clinical importance. During thorough discussions with modern pediatricians it is observed that they are surprised to see so detailed and accurate description of multiple syndromes and group of diseases of multi systemic-origin. Further they appreciated the views, symptomatology and the management before 15 B.C. when there was no advanced technology for the diagnosis, equipments for treatment and multispecialty setup of hospitals. Really it is a matter of proud that our heritage knowledge has been now days appreciated and supported by modern team also. Though description of aetiopathogenesis of Bala Grahas, general symptoms in a child affected with bala grahas has now been felt as vague among scholars but really they are explained in an applied manner and we can rearrange all these clinical features of Bala Grahas. The management there of is still of broad spectrum and may be effective along with certain mythological approaches.

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. The abode of 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. However here is an effort done by author to fulfill lacuna in understanding of balagraha but may require further modification in future.

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