

Invisible Vectors In Ayurveda: A Modern Perspective On Balagraha And Pediatric Syndromes

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ABSTRACT

Kaumarabhritya, a branch of Ashtanga Ayurveda, introduces the concept of Balagraha—diseases caused by invisible and unidentified vectors. Traditionally explained through mythological narratives, Balagraha has been largely dismissed in modern times due to a lack of scientific validation. This paper aims to reinterpret Balagraha through contemporary biomedical parameters and explore its clinical relevance. After a comprehensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts, it is evident that these obscure vectors may correspond to microorganisms such as bacteria and viruses, which are invisible to the naked eye yet capable of causing multisystem disorders and syndromes. This article attempts to bridge ancient wisdom with modern science for practical application in pediatric care.

Keywords: Kaumarabhritya, Balagraha, Graha Roga, neonatal care, Apsmara, Dhupana, microbial correlation

INTRODUCTION

The term "Balagraha" is derived from two Sanskrit words: Bal (child) and Graha (to seize or capture). These entities are believed to affect children, causing various disorders through invisible and rapid mechanisms, distinct from conventional pathogenesis¹.

References to Grahas are found in ancient texts such as the Rig Veda, Mahabharata, Kaushiksutra, Bhaishajya, Agnipurana, Markandeya Purana, and Brhadaranyaka Upanishad. In Kashyapa Samhita, Grahas are described in the Revati Kalpa Adhyaya. Mythologically, these Grahas were created by deities like Shiva, Parvati, Agni, and Kartikeya to protect Kartikeya, manifesting as Skandagraha, Skanda Apsmara, Naigmesha, Mukhmandika, and Putrika².

In modern interpretation, these Grahas may represent microorganisms—bacteria and viruses—that are invisible yet responsible for serious illnesses. Different Acharyas have classified Grahas variably:

- **Charaka:** Considered Grahas as innumerable, influenced by divine forces³.
- **Sushruta:** Identified 9 Grahas⁴.
- **Vagbhatta:** Added 3 more, totaling 12, and categorized them as male (Gram-positive) and female (Gram-negative) microbes.

TYPES OF BALAGRAHA

Acharya	Number of Grahas	Notable Grahas
Charaka	Innumerable	Divine influences
Sushruta	9	Shakuni, Revati, Putana, Andhaputana, Sheetaputana, Skanda, Skanda Apsmara, Mukhmandika, Naigmesha
Vagbhatta	12	Adds Swagraha, Pitragraha, Shushka Revati

Classification by Gender and Microbial Analogy

- **Male Grahas (Gram-positive):** Skanda, Vishakha, Mesha, Swagraha, Pitragraha⁵

- **Female Grahas (Gram-negative):** Putana, Sheetaputana, Andhaputana, Shakuni, Revati, Shushka Revati, Mukhmandika

Aims And Objectives

- To review Graha Roga using ancient Ayurvedic literature⁵
- To analyze the probable etiopathogenesis of different Graha Rogas
- To correlate Graha Rogas with modern medical conditions
- To explore clinical applications in contemporary pediatric practice

Modern Correlations Of Graha Rogas

Each Graha is correlated with a modern disease based on clinical features and pathogenesis. Below is a summary of key correlations:

Graha	Modern Disease	Key Symptoms
Skanda	Quadriplegia	Spastic limbs, cortical thumb, speech difficulty
Skanda Apasmara	Infantile Seizures	Frothing, limb tightening, unconsciousness
Naigmesha	Bacterial Meningitis	Fever, vomiting, bulging fontanelle
Swagraha	Rabies	Hydrophobia, tremors, opisthotonos
Pitrigraha	Pneumonia	Cyanosis, nasal flaring, poor feeding
Shakuni	Impetigo	Blisters, crusts, foul odor
Putana	Diarrhea	Loose stool, dehydration, disturbed sleep
Sheetaputana	Diarrhea with Dehydration	Watery stool, sunken eyes, lethargy
Andhaputana	Chronic Diarrhea	Malnutrition, edema, prone posture
Mukhmandika	Juvenile Diabetes	Polyuria, polydipsia, fruity breath
Revati	Pernicious Anemia	Fatigue, mouth ulcers, greenish stool
Shushka Revati	Abdominal Tuberculosis	Cachexia, abdominal lump, foul odor

Skanda Graha → Quadriplegia

Symptoms: Spastic limbs, improper neck holding, cortical thumb, speech difficulty
Ayurvedic Management: Vatahara herbs, ritual bathing, chanting, Rakta Chandan application
Modern Management: Physiotherapy, anticonvulsants, supportive care

Skanda Apasmara → Infantile Seizures

Symptoms: Frothing, limb tightening, unconsciousness, upward gaze
Ayurvedic Management: Bilva kwatha, Panchagavya, Kalyanaka Ghrita
Modern Management: Benzodiazepines, electrolyte correction, fever control

Naigmesha → Bacterial Meningitis

Symptoms: Fever, vomiting, bulging fontanelle, irritability
Ayurvedic Management: Bilva and Agnimantha water, banyan tree rituals
Modern Management: Broad-spectrum antibiotics, cerebral diuretics

Swagraha → Rabies/Hydrophobia

Symptoms: Tremors, opisthotonos, tongue bite, fear of water
Ayurvedic Management: Medicated oils (Satabari, Sariva)
Modern Management: Rabies vaccine, immunoglobulin, symptomatic care

Pitrigraha → Pneumonia

Symptoms: Cyanosis, nasal flaring, poor feeding, cadaveric odor
Ayurvedic Management: Kshirivriksha Kashaya
Modern Management: Oxygen therapy, antibiotics, nutritional support

Shakuni → Impetigo

Symptoms: Blisters, crusts, foul odor, itching
Ayurvedic Management: Vetasa, Amra, Kapitha water, Vrana Ropana
Modern Management: Antibiotics, antifungals, hygiene maintenance

Putana → Diarrhea

Symptoms: Loose stool, vomiting, disturbed sleep, dehydration
Ayurvedic Management: Kakolyadi Gana, Raksha Mantra, Sunya Griha Bali
Modern Management: ORS, IV fluids, antisecretory drugs

Sheetaputana → Diarrhea with Dehydration

Symptoms: Watery stool, sunken eyes, lethargy
Ayurvedic Management: Kapitha, Vimbi, Bilva water, Sura Sonita rituals
Modern Management: WHO dehydration protocol, IV fluids, antibiotics

Andhaputana → Chronic Diarrhea

Symptoms: Malnutrition, edema, prone posture, sour odor Ayurvedic Management: Tikta drugs, fumigation with bird waste Modern Management: Etiology-specific treatment, nutritional correction

Mukhmandika → Juvenile Diabetes

Symptoms: Polyuria, polydipsia, fruity breath, venous prominence Ayurvedic Management: Vata alleviating therapy, cow shelter rituals Modern Management: Insulin therapy, DKA prevention, dietary modification

Revati → Pernicious Anemia

Symptoms: Fatigue, mouth ulcers, greenish stool, foul clay odor Ayurvedic Management: Ashwagandha, Sringi, river bathing Modern Management: Vitamin B12, folic acid, high-protein diet

Shushka Revati → Abdominal Tuberculosis

Symptoms: Cachexia, abdominal lump, foul odor, hair loss Ayurvedic Management: Skanda Graha Cikitsa Modern Management: Anti-TB drugs, surgery if needed

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Ayurvedic Management

- **Snana (Bathing):** At sacred or symbolic locations⁶
- **Dhupana (Fumigation):** Using herbs, animal products
- **Mantra & Bali:** Ritualistic offerings and chants⁷
- **Ghrita (Medicated Ghee):** Astamangal, Abhaya, Purana
- **Herbal Therapies:** Bilva, Kapittha, Asana, Devdaru, etc.
- **Daiva Vyapasraya Cikitsa:** Spiritual healing methods⁸

Modern Medical Management^{10,11}

- **Pharmacological:** Antibiotics, anticonvulsants, antipyretics
- **Supportive Care:** IV fluids, oxygen therapy, nutritional support
- **Specialized Therapies:** Physiotherapy, insulin therapy, anti-TB drugs
- **Preventive Measures:** Vaccination, hygiene, early diagnosis

DISCUSSION

Balagraha represents one of the most intriguing and often misunderstood aspects of Ayurvedic pediatrics. Despite its mythological framing, the clinical descriptions are remarkably detailed and align with modern pathologies. Pediatricians today are often surprised by the accuracy of symptomatology and treatment protocols described centuries ago.

While skepticism persists, the Graha Roga framework offers a holistic view of disease—combining physical, psychological, and environmental factors. The therapeutic approaches, though rooted in tradition, often reflect broad-spectrum efficacy.

CONCLUSION

Balagras, once considered mythological entities, can now be reinterpreted as microbial agents responsible for pediatric diseases. Their classification, symptomatology, and treatment in Ayurvedic texts show a profound understanding of pathology long before the advent of modern diagnostics. Integrating cleanliness, hygiene, and preventive care remains central to managing these conditions. This paper offers a foundational step toward bridging ancient wisdom with modern clinical practice, though further research and refinement are warranted.

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