

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON BALATISARA (CHILDHOOD DIARRHEA) AND ITS MANAGEMENT IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Atisara is one of the most common gastrointestinal disorders described in Ayurvedic literature. The term Atisara refers to excessive passage of watery stools due to disturbance in digestive and absorptive mechanisms of the gastrointestinal tract. When this condition occurs in children it is known as Balatisara. Childhood diarrhea remains a major cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide, especially in developing countries where malnutrition, contaminated water, and poor sanitation prevail. Ayurvedic texts have described Atisara in detail including its etiology, classification, clinical features, pathogenesis, and management. According to Ayurvedic principles, impairment of digestive fire (Agnimandya) and vitiation of Doshas, particularly Vata, lead to increased fluidity of feces and frequent defecation. Management focuses on Nidana Parivarjana (removal of causative factors), correction of Agni, elimination of Ama, and administration of Deepana, Pachana, and Grahi drugs. Dietary regulation and lifestyle modification also play an important role in recovery. The present review attempts to compile classical references from Ayurvedic texts and correlate them with modern understanding of childhood diarrhea.

Keywords: Balatisara, Atisara, Childhood diarrhea, Ayurveda, Agnimandya

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the ancient system of medicine that emphasizes prevention as well as treatment of diseases. The classical aim of Ayurveda is described as:

“स्वस्थस्य स्वास्थ्य रक्षणं आतुरस्य विकार प्रशमनं च”¹

Meaning: Protection of health in healthy individuals and alleviation of disease in diseased persons.

Among gastrointestinal disorders described in Ayurveda, Atisara is considered one of the most frequently occurring diseases. It is characterized by frequent evacuation of watery stool associated with weakness and dehydration.³

In pediatric practice, diarrhea is a major concern because children have lower body reserves and are more prone to dehydration and electrolyte imbalance. According to global health reports, diarrheal diseases are among the leading causes of death in children under five years of age.²

Ayurvedic classics describe special pediatric conditions under Kaumarbhritya, where diseases affecting children are explained along with their treatment. Balatisara is one such disorder where the digestive system of the child becomes weak leading to frequent watery stools.

HISTORICAL REVIEW (LITERARY REVIEW)

Various Ayurvedic classics have described Atisara in detail.

Charaka Samhita

Acharya Charaka described Atisara under Chikitsasthana Chapter 19, explaining its types, causes, symptoms, and treatment.⁴

Sushruta Samhita

Acharya Sushruta discussed Atisara in Uttaratanttra Chapter 40, highlighting the role of Dosha imbalance and digestive impairment.⁵

Ashtanga Hridaya

Acharya Vagbhata provided a detailed explanation of the pathogenesis and classification of Atisara.³

Madhava Nidana

Madhavakara explained diagnostic features and differentiation of various types of Atisara.⁶

Kashyapa Samhita

Special emphasis on pediatric disorders including Balatisara is found in Kashyapa Samhita.⁹

NIRUKTI (ETIOLOGY)

The term Atisara is derived from two Sanskrit words:

Ati – Excessive

Sara – Flow

Thus, Atisara refers to excessive passage of liquid stool through the anal route.³

EPIDEMIOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD DIARRHEA

Diarrheal disease is a significant global health problem. According to the World Health Organization:

- Nearly 1.7 billion cases of childhood diarrheal disease occur every year.
- Diarrhea is the second leading cause of death in children under five years.¹¹
- Major causes include contaminated water, poor sanitation, malnutrition, and infections.

In developing countries such as India, childhood diarrhea remains a major public health concern.

NIDANA (ETIOLOGICAL FACTORS)

Samanya Nidana

Common causes include:

- Intake of heavy and incompatible food
- Excessive oily or dry diet
- Contaminated food and water
- Indigestion
- Overeating
- Psychological stress
- Suppression of natural urges^{4 5}

Vishishta Nidana

- **Vataja Atisara**

Excess exercise, fasting, and dry food intake aggravate Vata Dosha.⁴

- **Pittaja Atisara**

Excess consumption of sour, spicy, and salty food aggravates Pitta Dosha.⁴

- **Kaphaja Atisara**

Heavy, cold, and sweet food increases Kapha Dosha.⁴

PURVARUPA (PRODROMAL SYMPTOMS)

Premonitory symptoms include:

- Abdominal pain
- Flatulence
- Distension
- Indigestion
- Weakness

These symptoms indicate impairment of digestive fire.⁸

LAKSHANA (CLINICAL FEATURES)

General symptoms of Atisara include:

1. Frequent loose stools
2. Abdominal pain
3. Dehydration
4. Weakness
5. Loss of appetite
6. Thirst

Specific symptoms vary according to Dosha predominance.

SAMPRAPTI (PATHOGENESIS)

Acharya Vagbhata explains the pathogenesis as:

“प्रकुपितोऽनिलोऽपानं द्रवयित्वा पुरीषकम्।”³

Meaning: Aggravated Vata increases the liquidity of stool and propels it downward.

Samprapti Ghataka

Dosha – Vata dominant

Dushya – Rasa, Purisha

Agni – Mandagni

Srotas – Purishavaha Srotas

Srotodushti – Atipravritti

MODERN CORRELATION

Balatisara can be correlated with acute diarrhea in children in modern medicine.

Common causes include:

1. Viral infections (Rotavirus)
2. Bacterial infections
3. Food poisoning
4. Poor sanitation
5. Malnutrition

Symptoms include watery stool, dehydration, and electrolyte imbalance.

CHIKITSA SIDDHANTA (PRINCIPLES OF TREATMENT)

Nidana Parivarjana

Avoidance of etiological factors.⁴

Langhana

Light diet to improve digestion.

Deepana and Pachana

Enhancing digestive fire and removing Ama.

Grahi therapy

Reducing frequency of stool.

IMPORTANT AYURVEDIC DRUGS IN BALATISARA

Drug	Botanical Name	Action
Kutaja	Holarrhena antidysenterica	Antidiarrheal
Bilva	Aegle marmelos	Grahi
Mustaka	Cyperus rotundus	Digestive
Shunthi	Zingiber officinale	Deepana
Pippali	Piper longum	Pachana

PATHYA (DIETARY REGIMEN)

Recommended foods include:

- Peya
- Manda
- Vilepi
- Buttermilk
- Pomegranate
- Banana

These foods help restore digestive strength.⁹

APATHYA

Foods to avoid include:

- Heavy food
- Pulses
- Excess oil
- Day sleep

Incompatible food combinations¹⁰

PREVENTION OF BALATISARA

Preventive measures include:

- Maintaining hygiene
- Safe drinking water
- Proper nutrition

- Hand washing
- Breastfeeding in infants

DISCUSSION

Balatisara primarily results from impairment of digestive function. The role of Agni is central in Ayurvedic pathology. When digestive fire becomes weak, undigested food forms Ama which disturbs intestinal function leading to diarrhea.

Ayurvedic medicines with Deepana, Pachana, and Grahi properties correct digestive impairment and restore intestinal function. Dietary regulation and hygiene play crucial roles in preventing recurrence.

CONCLUSION

Balatisara is a common pediatric disorder with significant health implications. Ayurvedic literature provides detailed understanding regarding its etiology, pathogenesis, and management. Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment focusing on digestive correction and dietary regulation can effectively manage the condition and prevent complications.

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