

Traditional Folklore Use Of *Patha* (Malaithangi) In *Balaja Atisara*

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Abstract:

Introduction: *Balaja Atisara* is a frequently observed gastrointestinal disorder affecting young children. Traditional literature and folk practices describe Graha-related and Bayaja origins as important causes. In several rural communities, *Patha* (*Cissampelos pareira*) is applied externally over the bregmatic region rather than administered orally to control diarrhoea in infants. Aim: To evaluate the therapeutic relevance of external application of *Patha* paste on the bregma in *Balaja Atisara*, particularly in cases attributed to Bayaja and Graha etiologies. **Methodology:** Classical Ayurvedic references and contemporary scientific studies on *Cissampelos pareira* were reviewed. A field documentation survey was also conducted among folklore Vaidyas to record preparation, application method, and traditional rationale for bregmatic use. **Result:** *Patha* possesses *Tikta Rasa*, *Ushna Virya* helping regulate *Pitta* and reducing *dravatva*, which are relevant in the pathogenesis of *Atisara*. Ethno-medical data indicate that applying *Patha Kalka* on the anterior fontanelle may produce a rapid clinical response. Experimental studies on *Cissampelos pareira* suggest the presence of neuromuscular-active compounds such as Hayatin derivatives that may help regulate intestinal motility. **Discussion:** External application of *Patha* paste over the bregma appears to be a promising traditional approach for managing *Balaja Atisara*. Its non-invasive nature makes it particularly suitable for pediatric use and may justify further clinical exploration.

Keywords: *Balaja atisara*, *Patha*, Bregmatic application, Gut-Brain-Barrier, *Cissampelos pareira*

Introduction:

Balaja Atisara is one of the commonly encountered gastrointestinal conditions in childhood and continues to be a major pediatric concern. Current global data indicate that diarrhoeal disorders significantly contribute to mortality and nutritional deficits in

children under five years, particularly in low- and middle-income regions. Worldwide, millions of children continue to be affected annually, making diarrhoea a persistent public health challenge. Clinically, diarrhoea is characterized by the passage of frequent loose stools within a 24-hour period, often resulting in dehydration and electrolyte imbalance. [1]

In Ayurvedic literature, the term *Balatisara* is described in *Harita Samhita*, primarily in the therapeutic context. Although not categorized as a separate disease in the *Brihatrayi*, diarrhoea appears as a key symptom in various pediatric conditions including *Dantodbheda Janya Atisara*, *Ksheeralasaka*, *Vyadhijanya Atisara*, and several Graha-related disorders. Etiological factors include indulgence in incompatible food items (Bayaja) and pathological influences described under *Bala Graha* conditions. [2]

Aim:

To analyse the effectiveness of external *Patha* (*Cissampelos pareira*) paste application over the bregma in Balaja Atisara, particularly in Graha-associated and Bayaja types.

Objective:

- To document the traditional folklore practice involving bregmatic application of *Patha* in childhood diarrhoea.
- To explore possible mechanisms of action based on Ayurvedic concepts and emerging scientific evidence, including gut–brain signalling and modulation of *Pitta Dravatva*.

Methodology:

This work involved two approaches:

1. **Literary Review:** Classical Ayurvedic compendia, Nighantus, and peer-reviewed scientific literature related to *Cissampelos pareira* were reviewed to understand traditional indications and pharmacological relevance.
2. **Field Documentation:** A qualitative survey was conducted among folklore Vaidyas from selected regions to record traditional preparation methods, dosage forms, and therapeutic observations.

The collected information was analysed with reference to both Ayurvedic conceptual frameworks and possible neuro-gastrointestinal mechanisms.

Review:

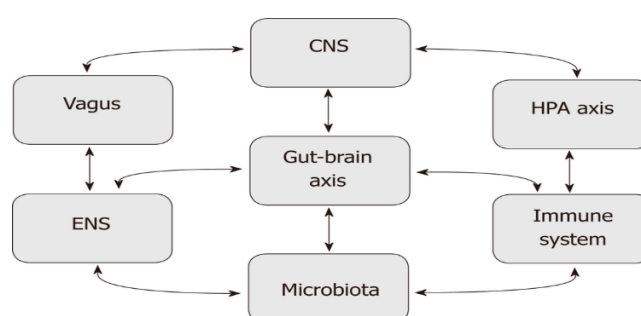
Patha belongs to the family Menispermaceae and holds an important place in Ayurvedic therapeutics. It is categorized under *Jwarahara* and *Stanyashodhana Mahakashaya* in *Charaka Samhita* [3] and under various herbal groups in *Sushruta Samhita*. [4]

Its pharmacological attributes include *Tikta Rasa*, supportive in reducing *Pitta*; *Ushna Virya* and *Katu Vipaka*, supportive in reducing *kapha*; and *Tikshna Guna*, which helps in reducing *vata*. These properties together assist in regulating *Tridosha* disturbances implicated in *Atisara*. [5][6]

Traditional healers emphasize that the external application of *Patha Kalka*—rather than internal administration—is particularly suitable for infants. The method resembles therapeutic thalam application practices in Kerala-based Ayurveda. The anterior fontanelle (bregma) remains anatomically soft until approximately 18 months, allowing easier absorption pathways traditionally believed to influence neurological and gastrointestinal functions.

Pharmacological investigations report that alkaloids present in *Cissampelos pareira*, such as Hayatin derivatives, may reduce intestinal motility through neuromuscular relaxation, which aligns with its anti-diarrhoeal role. [8][9]

Figure 1 Mechanism behind gut-brain axis. (From “Functional gastrointestinal disorders and gut-brain axis: What does the future hold”, by Kashif Mukhtar, Hasam Nawaz, Shahab Abid.)

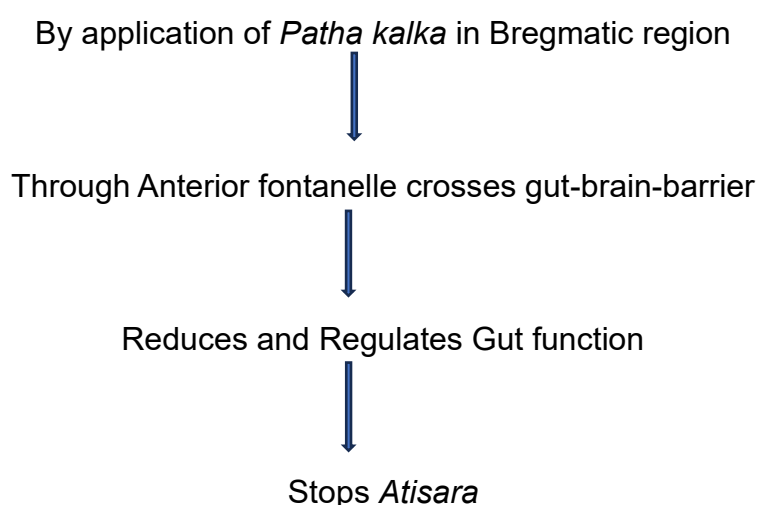


Discussion:

Effective management of diarrhoea in infants is crucial due to the associated risks of dehydration, growth retardation, and immune compromise. Administering oral medicines to children can be difficult because of taste issues, refusal, and swallowing

challenges, making externally applied remedies highly valuable in pediatric healthcare.

Based on folklore clinical observations and Ayurvedic rationale, applying *Patha Kalka* over the bregmatic region offers a rapid and non-invasive therapeutic approach. The possible involvement of a gut–brain regulatory pathway offers an interesting direction for further interdisciplinary research. The presence of neuromuscular-active compounds in the plant also supports the traditional claim of reduced intestinal motility. *Patha* is a magical drug due to its properties like *boothagna*, etc. It is commonly found in the country yard.



Conclusion:

Protecting the pediatric population from diarrhoeal episodes is essential to ensure healthy development and prevent complications. The traditional practice of applying *Patha* paste externally over the bregma provides a simple, culturally acceptable, and cost-effective method that does not require oral intake. The findings of this work support the traditional view that such an approach may help control Balaja Atisara and potentially prevent recurrent episodes associated with Graha-based etiologies. Further controlled studies are recommended to validate efficacy and safety.

Acknowledgment:

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to Dr. Divya. P. S. for her valuable insights.

Funding source:

No financial support was received.

Conflict of interest:

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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