ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 10| October 2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF *Bala* AND *Vyadhikshamatva* IN AYURVEDA WITH RESPECT TO IMMUNITY: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Vyadhikshamatva is the fundamental Ayurvedic concept of host defense and physiological resilience, encompassing both resistance against disease manifestation and suppression of disease severity. It is intrinsically tied to the concept of Bala (biological strength) and Ojas (the vital essence of all tissues). This review evaluates the Ayurvedic principles of Bala, Vyadhikshamatva, and Ojas, mapping them onto contemporary concepts of innate, adaptive, and tissue-level immunity. Materials were synthesized from classical texts including the Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita, alongside contemporary literature. The study highlights three forms of Bala: Sahaja (innate), Kalaja (chronobiological/temporal), and Yuktikrita (acquired through nutrition, lifestyle, and therapeutic interventions). Measures to enhance Yuktikrita Bala, such as Ahara (dietary regimens), Vihara (lifestyle practices), Agni Raksana (digestive fire preservation), Panchakarma (purificatory procedures), and Rasayana (rejuvenation therapy), offer actionable, preventive, and therapeutic strategies to maintain host homeostasis.

KEYWORDS: *Bala, Vyadhikshamatva, Ojas, Rasayana, Yuktikrita Bala, Immunity.*

INTRODUCTION

In modern medicine, immunity refers to the host's capacity to recognize, withstand, and eliminate foreign pathogens while preserving self-tolerance. In classical Ayurvedic literature, this defense and adaptive potential is described through the concepts of *Vyadhikshamatva*,[1] *Bala*[2], and *Ojas*[3].

Vyadhikshamatva (derived from *vyadhi*, meaning disease or painful condition, and *kshamata*, meaning capacity or endurance) was formally defined by Chakrapanidatta as having two distinct components:

1. *Vyadhibala-virodhitvam*: The capacity to resist or attenuate the severity of a disease already present in the body.
2. *Vyadhi-utpada-pratibandhakatvam*: The capacity to prevent the onset or initial manifestation of a disease.

Acharya Sushruta notes that *Ojas*, the ultimate refined essence (*tejas*) of all seven *Dhatus* (tissues) from *Rasa* to *Shukra*, represents the fundamental substrate of *Bala*. *Bala* enables muscular integrity, physical stability, sensory clarity, and metabolic endurance. Understanding *Vyadhikshamatva* beyond passive defense—as an active biological state maintained by *Tridosha* balance, efficient *Agni* (metabolic fire), and tissue homeostasis—provides valuable insights into holistic immune management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review utilized a conceptual analytical approach:

- Classical texts *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Astanga Hridaya*
- Classical commentaries, notably Chakrapanidatta's *Ayurveda Dipika* on *Charaka Samhita*, were consulted for precise conceptual definitions.
- Modern immunological literature for contemporary concepts of innate immunity, adaptive immunity, immune tolerance, and immunomodulation.

DISCUSSION

1. Classification of *Bala* and Immunological Correlations

According to *Charaka Samhita* (*Sutra Sthana* 11/36), *Bala* is categorized into three types:

- **Sahaja Bala[4]:** The natural or genetic strength present from birth (*Shareera-sattva-prakrita*). It reflects innate mucosal barrier integrity, cellular immunity, and genetic resistance.
- **Kalaja Bala[5]:** Seasonal (*Ritu-krita*) and age-dependent (*Vayo-krita*) fluctuations in strength. *Bala* naturally varies with seasons (e.g., lower during *Adana Kala* or summer, higher during *Visarga Kala* or winter) and age stages (e.g., childhood, youth, old age).
- **Yuktikrita Bala[6]:** Acquired strength developed through deliberate practices, including balanced nutrition (*Ahara*), lifestyle (*Vihara*), physical exercise (*Vyayama*), and immunomodulatory interventions (*Rasayana*). This directly parallels acquired or adaptive immunity.

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Ayurvedic Concept	Primary Features	Modern Immunological Correlation
Sahaja Bala	Inherited genetic and constitutional strength from birth	Innate immunity (genetic factors, baseline barrier integrity)
Kalaja Bala	Age- and season-dependent physiological variation in strength	Chronobiology of immunity, age-related immunosenescence
Yuktikrita Bala	Acquired strength via diet, exercise, lifestyle, and therapies	Adaptive/Acquired immunity, lifestyle-induced immunomodulation

2. Factors Determining *Bala* (*Balavriddhikara Bhava*)[7]

Charaka Samhita (*Sharira Sthana* 6/13) outlines factors that enhance biological strength:

- *Desha Sampat*: Birth in a healthy, favorable environment.
- *Kala Sampat*: Birth during favorable seasonal periods (*Visarga Kala*).
- *Bija-Kshetra Sampat*: Genetic excellence of parental sperm/ovum (*Bija*) and intrauterine environment (*Kshetra*).
- *Ahara & Sharira Sampat*: Superior quality of diet and physical constitution.
- *Satya & Satmya Sampat*: Psychological resilience and habituation to wholesome substances.

3. The Central Role of *Ojas*

Ojas is considered the physical substrate of *Vyadhikshamatva*. It is categorized into:

- **Para Ojas:** Located in the heart (*Hridaya*), supreme in quality, measuring eight drops (*Ashta Bindu*); its destruction results in immediate death.[8]
- **Apara Ojas (Shleshmika Ojas):** Circulates throughout the body (*Ardhanjali Pramana*), nourishing tissues and conferring disease resistance. Modern correlations map *Apara Ojas* to immunoglobulins, circulating antibodies, functional leukocytes, and tissue-protective metabolic factors.[9]

Impairments of *Ojas* progress through three stages:

1. *Ojovisramsa*: Displacement or functional impairment of *Ojas* from its normal sites, causing joint looseness, fatigue, and *Dosha* displacement.[10]
2. *Ojovyapad*: Qualitative alteration of *Ojas* by corrupted *Doshas*, causing heaviness, edema, and altered complexion. [11]
3. *Ojakshaya*: Quantitative depletion of *Ojas*, leading to unconsciousness, tissue wasting, severe immunodeficiency, and death.[12]

4. Practical Interventions to Enhance *Vyadhikshamatva*

Ayurveda provides targeted interventions to build *Yuktikrita Bala* and safeguard *Ojas*:

- **Ahara (Dietary Measures):** Regular intake of *Shastika Shali* (red rice), *Mudga* (green gram), *Ghrita* (ghee), *Ksheera* (milk), and *Madhu* (honey) supports *Agni* and *Ojas* synthesis.
- **Vihara & Sadvritta:** Adherence to *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), adequate sleep (*Nidra*), and ethical conduct (*Achara Rasayana*) minimizes psychological and metabolic stress, preventing *Ojas* depletion.
- **Agni Rakshana & Shodhana:** Preserving *Jatharagni* prevents *Ama* formation (toxic metabolic intermediate). Seasonal *Panchakarma* (*Kaale Sanshodhanam*) eliminates accumulated *Doshas* before they degrade host immunity.
- **Rasayana Therapy:** Formulations such as *Chyavanaprasha*, *Guduchi Rasayana*, *Brahmi Rasayana*, and *Agastya Haritaki* act at the level of *Rasa* (nutrient flux), *Agni* (metabolism), and *Srotas* (micro-channels) to optimize immune performance.

CONCLUSION

Vyadhikshamatva in Ayurveda is a holistic, multi-dimensional framework encompassing immune defense, environmental adaptation, and physiological maintenance. Rather than viewing immunity strictly as a cell-mediated or humoral reaction against foreign invaders, Ayurveda defines it as an integrated state of metabolic harmony (*Agni*), tissue purity (*Dhatu Samya*), and vital essence (*Ojas*). Incorporating Ayurvedic modalities—particularly *Agni Deepana*, *Shodhana*, and *Rasayana*—provides a comprehensive lifestyle and therapeutic framework for immune enhancement and disease prevention.

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