

Ashtavidha Pariksha- An Ancient Useful Diagnostic Tool

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, one of the world's oldest healing sciences, is founded on meticulous observation and systematic evaluation of human health. It offers several diagnostic approaches for understanding an individual's physical and mental state. Among these, the **AshtavidhaPariksha** or eightfold examination is regarded as one of the most reliable and time-honored methods. This classical diagnostic approach consists of eight techniques that collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the patient's well-being.

Accurate diagnosis, followed by appropriate treatment, is considered fundamental in Ayurveda. Although multiple tools of examination are available, AshtavidhaPariksha stands out as it presents a clear picture of both health and disease conditions. Detailed descriptions of this method are found in the works of **Acharya Yogaratnakara**, who emphasized its significance in clinical practice. The eightfold examination includes: **Nadi (pulse)**, **Mootra (urine)**, **Mala (stool)**, **Jihwa (tongue)**, **Shabda (speech)**, **Sparsha (touch)**, **Drik (eyes)**, and **Akriti (appearance/posture)**.

While Ayurveda describes numerous examination techniques, this eightfold approach by Acharya Yogaratnakara is considered particularly important because of its striking similarity to the general physical examination used in modern medicine. This article highlights the clinical relevance of AshtavidhaPariksha and its usefulness as a diagnostic tool for both practitioners and students of Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS: – Ayurveda, Ancient, Examination, AshtavidhaPariksha, Illness, Healthy, Diagnostic tool.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life and health, emphasizes addressing diseases from their very roots. To achieve this, it has developed specific diagnostic approaches aimed at identifying the fundamental cause of illness. One such time-tested method is the **Ashtavidha Pariksha**, also referred to as **AshtasthanaPariksha**.

Acharya Yogaratnakara highlights the importance of **VyadhiVinischaya** (accurate diagnosis of disease). A physician, he stresses, must carefully examine the patient and establish a precise diagnosis (**Vyadhi Nirnaya**). Only after fully understanding the nature and characteristics of the disease should treatment (**Chikitsa**) be initiated, either with appropriate medicines (**Aushadha**) or therapeutic procedures such as **Panchakarma**.

Classical Ayurvedic texts describe various diagnostic techniques to aid in disease identification, as well as in evaluating the strength of the patient (**Rogibala**) and the severity of the disease (**Rogabala**). Among these, **Ashtavidha Pariksha** stands out as an eightfold diagnostic framework designed to uncover the root of illness. These eight clinical assessment tools provide a holistic understanding of the patient's underlying condition.

The components of **AshtavidhaPariksha** are as follows:

1. **Nadi Pariksha** – Pulse examination
2. **Mala Pariksha** – Stool examination
3. **Mutra Pariksha** – Urine examination
4. **JihvaPariksha** – Tongue examination
5. **Shabda Pariksha** – Voice/speech examination
6. **Sparsha Pariksha** – Palpation and tactile assessment
7. **Drik Pariksha** – Eye/vision examination
8. **Akriti Pariksha** – General appearance and body structure examination

II. MATERIALS AND REFERENCES ON ASHTAVIDHA PARIKSHA

The references regarding **AshtavidhaPariksha** have been compiled from the available Ayurvedic literature. A detailed description from various classical sources is presented below:

1. Nadi Pariksha (Pulse Examination)

The assessment of **Doshas** in both healthy and diseased individuals can be achieved through Nadi Pariksha. Just as the strings of a Veena

produce diverse ragas, the pulse reflects the variations of disease progression. Similar to Prakriti, the pulse also differs from person to person depending on health and disease status.

During examination, three fingers are placed over the radial pulse – the **index finger** representing Vata, the **middle finger** Pitta, and the **ring finger** Kapha. Variations in pulse movement such as manda (slow), madhyama (moderate), and tikshna (fast) indicate the dominance of respective doshas. Through this method, the involvement of Vata, Pitta, Kapha, dual-dosha (Dwandwaja), or triple-dosha (Tridoshaja) can be identified, along with disease prognosis (Sadhya-Asadhyata).

Method of Examination: Nadi should be examined when the patient is mentally stable and calm, usually below the right thumb. The patient's elbow should be slightly flexed, the wrist bent gently, and the physician should palpate by applying and releasing pressure alternately, repeating this thrice for accuracy.

Nadi Gati (Pulse Patterns):

- VatajaNadi – resembles the movements of a snake or leech.
- PittajaNadi – similar to a crow, lark, or frog.
- KaphajaNadi – like a swan, pigeon, or cock.
- Vata-Kaphaja – snake and swan.
- Pitta-Kaphaja – monkey and swan.
- Vata-Pittaja – snake and frog.
- Sannipataja – woodpecker-like.

Ideal Timing: The best time for pulse examination is early morning on an empty stomach, though in emergencies it may be performed at any time. While the radial artery is most commonly examined due to its accessibility, other peripheral pulses may also be assessed.

Contraindications: Pulse examination should be avoided immediately after a bath, meals, massage, or when the patient is hungry or asleep, as these conditions distort accuracy.

2. Mutra Pariksha (Urine Examination)

Urine, being the end product of metabolism, reflects the body's internal pathology. Its features are influenced by factors such as blood pressure, nutrition, hydration, and overall health.

Collection Method: Morning urine is preferred for examination. The midstream sample, rather than the initial flow, should be collected in a clean vessel for accurate assessment.

Dosha-specific Features:

- Vata aggravation – urine appears light yellow, rough, and dries quickly.
- Pitta aggravation – urine becomes reddish.
- Kapha aggravation – urine is oily, whitish, and frothy with bubbles.
- Raktadushti – urine is hot and blood-tinged.

Taila Bindu Pariksha: A drop of sesame oil (tilataila) is placed on urine. The spread of the drop indicates prognosis and dosha involvement, helping in deciding curability.

3. Mala Pariksha (Stool Examination)

Stool reflects the state of digestion and dosha predominance.

- Vata aggravation – stool is hard, dry, broken, smoky, or frothy.
- Pitta aggravation – stool is yellowish, binding, or broken.
- Kapha aggravation – stool appears whitish, slimy, and dense.
- Tridoshaja – combined features of all three doshas.

Poor digestion results in foul-smelling stool that sinks in water. Chronic constipation indicates Vata imbalance, whereas frequent diarrhea suggests Pitta predominance.

4. JihvaPariksha (Tongue Examination)

The tongue mirrors the condition of internal organs. Its **colour, coating, shape, surface, and movement** provide diagnostic clues.

- Vata imbalance – dry, cracked, dark or brownish tongue.
- Pitta imbalance – reddish, inflamed tongue.
- Kapha imbalance – whitish, sticky tongue.
- Sannipataja – thorny, blackish, and dry tongue.

Different regions of the tongue correspond to specific organs, making it a valuable diagnostic tool for systemic disorders.

5. Shabda Pariksha (Voice Examination)

The manner of speech reveals doshic imbalance:

- Vata – fast, irregular, and inconsistent speech.
- Pitta – sharp, authoritative, and critical tone.
- Kapha – slow, heavy, and monotonous speech.

In balanced states, the voice is natural and steady. When aggravated, Kapha causes heaviness, Pitta results in a cracked voice, and Vata leads to

roughness and hoarseness. This assessment resembles **auscultation** in modern clinical practice.

6. Sparsha Pariksha (Examination by Touch)

This includes palpation and percussion to assess **temperature, tenderness, texture, and abnormalities**.

- Vata prakriti – cold, rough, and dry skin.
- Pitta prakriti – warm, moist skin with inflammatory tendencies.
- Kapha prakriti – soft, cold, and damp skin, often prone to edema.

Through tactile sensation, doshic imbalance and organ conditions can be evaluated.

7. Drik Pariksha (Eye Examination)

The eyes provide significant insight into dosha predominance:

- Vata – sunken, dry, reddish-brown eyes.
- Pitta – red or yellowish eyes, often with burning and photophobia.
- Kapha – watery, heavy eyes with swollen eyelids.

Other signs such as dark circles, rings around the sclera, or spots may indicate organ dysfunctions.

8. Akriti Pariksha (Examination of General Appearance)

Akriti refers to the overall physique and constitution of an individual. The external body features often correspond to dosha predominance:

- Vata – lean, thin body frame.
- Pitta – medium build with sharp features.
- Kapha – well-built, heavy body with soft tissues.

The external form thus provides information about a person's constitution, strength, and disease susceptibility.

III. DISCUSSION

The above-mentioned diagnostic methods primarily focus on evaluating the characteristics of the **three Doshas** and their relative imbalances. Interestingly, AshtavidhaPariksha is not described in the Brihatrayi texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, or AshtangaSamgraha. The concept of **Nadi Pariksha** (pulse examination) was first introduced by Maharshi Sharangadhara, while

a detailed explanation of the eightfold examination was later given by Acharya Yogaratnakara.

Among all the diagnostic tools, **Nadi Pariksha** continues to hold prime importance in Ayurveda. Many practitioners are capable of diagnosing solely by pulse examination. Yogaratnakara elaborates the variations in pulse under the influence of doshas and their combinations, further illustrating these through the movements of animals to make the concept more understandable. Such descriptions not only help in identifying the disease but also in evaluating prognosis, especially in conditions like fevers and other systemic disorders.

Similarly, **Mutra Pariksha** (urine analysis) provides valuable insight into abnormalities of the MutravahaSrotas. Variations in urine colour, quantity, and consistency indicate underlying disease conditions. **Mala Pariksha** (stool examination) helps in identifying disorders of the Annavaha and PurishavahaSrotas, as stool characteristics are influenced by multiple factors such as Prakriti, Ahara, Vihara, Kala, Satmya, and Vyadhi.

JihvaPariksha (examination of the tongue) is also significant, as the tongue is often considered the "mirror of the stomach." Its appearance—such as colour, shape, fissures, coating, tremors, or ulcerations—provides crucial diagnostic clues. **Shabda Pariksha** (assessment of voice and sounds) holds its own importance, as sound is one of the direct means (Pratyaksha Pramana) of knowledge. Alterations in physiological sounds generated by organs like the heart or intestines, or changes in speech due to disease, aid in diagnosis. Techniques like percussion further assist in detecting organ positions, fluid accumulation, or gaseous states in cavities.

Sparsha Pariksha (examination by touch) has been highlighted by almost all Acharyas and is included not only in AshtavidhaPariksha but also in Trividha and ShadvidhaPariksha, demonstrating its fundamental diagnostic value. **Drik Pariksha** (eye examination) provides key signs, including ArishtaLakshanas such as Urdhva Drishti and Bhramayata. **Akriti Pariksha** (general appearance) relates to physiognomy, where the patient's physical features such as build, height, complexion, and posture are carefully observed. In certain conditions, such as Dhanustambha, Manyastambha, and Ardita, external postures themselves provide valuable diagnostic information.

IV. CONCLUSION

In Ayurveda, diagnosis is not restricted to naming a disease but extends to identifying the underlying **dosha imbalance**. The eight components of AshtavidhaPariksha provide a systematic framework for understanding these imbalances, thereby guiding both diagnosis and prognosis. This diagnostic model was carefully designed to be clinically applicable, assisting physicians in determining whether they can manage a case independently or if referral to another specialty is more appropriate.

Based on clinical observations obtained through these methods, practitioners can formulate individualized treatment protocols. Since therapeutic principles in Ayurveda are tailored according to the patient's strength (Rogibala) and the severity of disease (Rogabala), mastery of Ashtavidha Pariksha becomes indispensable for every physician. Over time, various methods of examination have been adopted, yet the eightfold examination remains one of the most practical and insightful approaches. Thus, AshtavidhaPariksha of Yogaratnakara continues to serve as a vital diagnostic tool, significantly benefiting physicians and Vaidyas in their clinical practice.

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