



Review Article

NADI PARIKSHANA AS A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Nadi Parikshan is an ancient diagnostic method that has been practised in Ayurveda for thousands of years to evaluate an individual's physical, mental, and emotional state. It offers deep insights into a person's constitution i.e., *Prakruti*, current health status, and potential disease predispositions. Acharya Yogratnakar includes *Nadi Parikshan* as one of the *Ashtavidha Rogi Parikshana*, highlighting its significance in clinical assessment. In modern science, pulse is used as an indicator of the cardiac system to get essential cardiovascular information through heart rate, blood pressure, etc. Although innovations have transformed healthcare, they have also led to increasing dependence on instrument-based investigations, often overshadowing fundamental bedside examination skills. This shift emphasizes the importance of preserving and strengthening traditional clinical methods such as *Nadi Parikshan* which reflects whole body's status. However, classical *Nadi Pariksha* is largely subjective, relying heavily on the practitioner's experience and tactile sensitivity. To enhance its accuracy, objectivity, and reproducibility, there arose a need to modernize this technique. Instruments like *Nadi Tarangini*, *Nadi Yantra* were developed to digitally record, interpret, and standardize pulse signals. These devices bridge the gap between traditional Ayurvedic pulse diagnosis and the expectations of contemporary evidence-based clinical practice. *Nadi Parikshan* remains a non-invasive, cost-effective, and holistic method, enabling *Vaidya's* to design personalized interventions involving diet, lifestyle, and medication.

INTRODUCTION

Parikshan plays a significant role in diagnosis of the diseases, diagnosis is important before starting treatment.^[1] There are different types of examination in ayurvedic texts like *Trividha Pariksha*, *Shadvidha Pariksha*, *Ashtavidha Pariksha*, *Dashavidha Pariksha* etc. *Ashtavidha Rogipariksha* is one of the main diagnostic tools prescribed in Ayurveda. Acharya Yogaratnakara described eight methods of *Rogi Parikshan*, namely *Nadi*, *Mala*, *Mutra*, *Jivha*, *Shabda*, *Sparsha*, *Drik* and *Akruti* for the diagnosis of diseases.^[2] Amongst them *Nadi Parikshan* is most important. *Nadi* is kept first in *Astavidha Pariksha* because it gives the

quickest, most comprehensive and immediate assessment of *Dosha* status, *Bala*, and overall health, guiding the rest of *Astavidha Parikshana*. *Dhamani*, *Dhara*, *Tantuki*, *Jeevangyana* are some other names of *Nadi*.^[3] *Nadi parikshan* also known as pulse diagnosis is an ancient Ayurvedic technique used to diagnose and assess an individual's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, it helps to identify the imbalance in three *Doshas* and their impact on the body. It detects early signs of diseases. *Nadi Parikshan* is necessary to diagnose altered condition of *Doshas* like diminished functions or hyper functions or normal function of *Doshas*. It also determines the *Prakriti* of an individual

In Ayurveda *Darshan Sparshan* and *Prashana* are the three main ways to examine a patient.^[4] Out of these three methods *Sparshan Parikshana* plays a major role in *Nadi Parikshana*, as it involves the tactile examination of the pulse, feeling its temperature (warm or cold), rhythm, strength, speed and movement qualities.

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Modern science examines the pulse to determine heart rate, rhythm, arterial wall tension, blood flow, and cardiovascular health. It detects tachycardia, bradycardia, arrhythmia, shock, dehydration, and circulatory efficiency. Thus, in modern science, pulse monitoring is primarily a cardiovascular physiological indication. In contrast, Ayurveda regards *Nadi Parikshana* as a holistic diagnostic tool, with the pulse reflecting the complete body's *Dosha* balance. *Vaidyas* evaluate the quality, *Gati*, temperature, strength, rhythm, and nature of the *Nadi* to determine the predominant *Dosha* i.e. *Vata*, *Pitta*, or *Kapha*, and the status of *Agni*, *Strotas*, *Bala*, and *Ama*.

Pulse Location

Although Ayurveda emphasises the importance of feeling the pulse at the radial artery in order to determine *Doshas*, it does not limit the position of the pulse to this spot; rather, it states that the pulse can be felt from eight different points. The ancient text *Basavarajeeyam* lists four locations to feel *Nadi*- two at the radial artery, two at the ankle, two at the neck area, and two at the nasal region.^[5] Additionally, it is mentioned that the radial artery can be utilised to learn about the *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* *Doshas*. *Nadi Pariksha*, which is based on the radial artery, is widely employed since it is crucial to assess *Tridoshas* for the diagnosis and treatment, moreover it is chosen due to its convenience to read and its location is easily available compared to others. The *Nadi* in the neck and nasal regions are equally vital in disease diagnosis and prognosis. The *Nadi* in the nose may identify diseases of the head, eyes, and ears, while the *Nadi* in the neck can detect symptoms such as fear, grief, fury, desire, and fever. The ankle's *Nadi* perceives health and vitality, as well as fever and its relief. Ayurvedic literature states that *Nadi pariksha*, is not limited to the radial artery but also encompasses other arteries. In current physiology, the pulse is palpated at the radial, carotid, femoral, brachial, and ankle arteries.

There are 72,000 *Nadis* in the *Pranamayakosha*, or energy body. The *Ida*, *Pingala*, and *Sushumna* are the three fundamental *Nadis* from which the 72,000 *Nadis* are derived, the left, right, and central.^[6] *Nadis* are channels or paths for *Prana*. The most crucial channel is *Sushumna*. It establishes a connection between the base and crown *Chakras*, the left channel (*Ida*) represents the vitality of the moon. In Sanskrit, the term "*Ida*" signifies "comfort". *Ida* has feminine energy and a cooling influence, similar to the moon. It travels to the left nostril from the left testicle. *Pingala* is connected to solar power. *Pingala* exudes manly vigour and a sunlike disposition. It has masculine energy. It travels from the right testicle to the right nostril at a warming temperature. This is the

reason why *Nadi* of women is taken from the left hand and from the right in male.

Procedure of Nadi Parikshan

Morning, empty stomach is the ideal time for *Nadi Pariksha*. The patient, or *Rogi*, should be quiet and cool-headed, and the doctor should be sitting comfortably and in a healthy, composed state^[7]. *Vaidya* needs to use his hand to gently hold the patients elbow while using his right index, middle, and ring fingers to sense the pulse in the area close to his wrist i.e. first index finger should be placed near thumb then the middle finger followed by ring finger. The three fingers represent *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* respectively.^[8] The right hand of male and the left hand of female is taken for *Nadi Parikshan*^[9]. A regular steady pulse is normal, analysing a *Nadi* means focusing on its parameters like *Gati*, *Vega*, *Bala* etc. The pulse is divided into 7 levels and each level depicts some aspect of body.^[10]

In *Nadi Parikshana*, the pulse is examined at seven depths by gradually modifying finger pressure. At the first superficial level, the *Vaidya* uses the lightest touch to assess *Vikruti*, indicating the present *dosha* imbalance i.e. *Vata*, *Pitta* or *Kapha*. At the second level, slightly increased pressure helps evaluate *Manasa Vikruti*, where subtle variations show emotional or mental disturbances. Going deeper, pressing to the third level, the *Vaidya*'s studies sub-*Doshas* i.e. subtypes of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*, identifying functional disturbances within each *Dosha* through their *Guna*. With deeper pressure at the fourth level, the *Vaidya* senses *Ojas*, *Tejas*, and *Prana*. *Ojas* is the essence of all *Dhatus* which moves through plasma and is represented at fourth level by pulsation under the ring finger i.e. the *Kapha* finger. The *Tejas* is felt under middle finger and the *Prana* which is the continuous flow of communication between two cells is felt under the index finger at fourth level. When the spike is weak it means the *Prana* is weak and if the spike is strong, *Prana* is strong. Same follows for *Tejas* and *Oja*.

At the fifth level, the *Vaidya* examines the *Dhatu* condition, sensing *Kshya*, *Vridhhi* and *Poshan* of *Dhatu*. The ring finger assesses *Ras* and *Rakta*, *Dhatus*, the middle finger assesses *Mamsa* and *Meda* *Dhatu* and the index finger assess *Asthi* and *Majja* *Dhatu*. Condition of *Shukra* *Dhatu* is assessed considering all three fingers. At the sixth level, still deeper but controlled pressure reveals *Manasa Prakruti*, reflecting the inherent psychological nature. For knowing *Manas-Prakriti* one has to go to the deepest level i.e., 7th level where a spike is felt which is imagined to the centre of lotus and then release slight pressure to come to 6th level, at this point slight change in direction of spike is felt. That direction is compared with the petal of lotus and each petal depicts a *Manas Prakriti* as shown in the

Figure 1. Out of three fingers placed on radial artery, one finger on which spike is prominently felt is taken into consideration and *Manas Prakriti* is read under that finger.

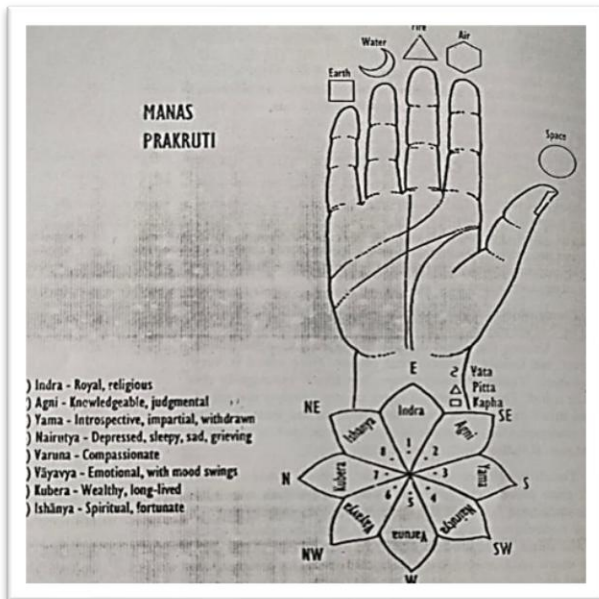


Fig. 1: Manas Prakruti Assessment

Finally, maximum comfortable depth at the seventh level reveals *Prakruti*, the unchanging constitutional pattern established at birth. The exact amount of pressure required to move from one level to the next is not measured in fixed units, because the sensitivity of each patient's pulse varies. Instead, the ability to perceive these levels develops gradually through continuous practice, refinement of tactile sensitivity, and repeated clinical exposure.

Attributes of pulse

Gati- *Gati* is an important tool of diagnosis in Ayurveda as it reflects the *Dosha* predominance in one's body. Movement of the pulse is defined as the *Gati* of the pulse. *Acharyas* have compared the movement of pulse with the movement of animals for example, the *Vata Nadi* has *Sarpa Gati* [snake pulse] or *Jaloka* [leech], *Pitta Nadi* has *Manduk Gati* [frog pulse] and *Kapha Nadi* has *Hamsa Gati* [swan pulse].^[11] The tip of finger is used to determine the *Gati* of pulse. *Vata Nadi* is *Vakra* and *Kutil* in nature.^[12] *Pitta Nadi* is hopping and jumping in nature that is *Chapal*. *Kapha Nadi* is slow in nature. Further there are also pulses which determine if any pathology is taking place inside the body like *Lavaka Gati* gives the possibility of cervicitis in women and proctitis in man. *Mayur Gati* is seen in arterial hypertension, *Ushtra Gati* indicates aortic stenosis.

Vega- The number of beats per minute is called as *Vega* also known as pulse rate in modern science. Normal pulse rate ranges between 60-100 beats per minute, however, it may vary from person to person

and according to age and condition.^[13] According to *Ayurved Vega* or *Nadi* is high in *Vata*, i.e., between 80-95, medium in *Pitta* 70-80 and low in *Kapha* 50-60. The rate of pulse determines the metabolism of our body. *Nadivega* and *Agni* (digestive fire) is interconnected i.e. when *Agni* is at its optimum state. *Nadi* will be faster whereas slower *Nadi Vega* determines weaker *Agni*. This *Agni* determines the metabolism of our body, hence *Nadi Vega* is an indicator of our metabolism in other words.

Tala- The time interval between two consecutive uplifts is known as *Tala*. *Nadi* is rhythmic with regular intervals in any healthy individual. *Tala* is the rhythm of *Nadi*. In a healthy individual the *Tala* is in a regular manner. In *Vata Nadi* the rhythm is irregular while *Pitta* and *Kapha Nadi* are regular in nature.

Bala- It refers to the force of the pulse. the force felt on the fingertip is the force exerted on the blood vessel which is the *Bala* of *Nadi*. *Bala* is high in *Pitta*, moderate in *Kapha* and low in *Vata*.

Akruti -Akruti is the term used to describe the volume and tension of the artery. Volume is the uplift felt by the finger. The amount of blood pumped out during the systolic phase is related to the pulse's volume. High volume denotes high blood pressure, while low volume denotes low systolic blood pressure.

Tapman- Temperature of pulse is *Tapman*. *Vata Nadi* is cold, *Pitta Nadi* is hot and *Kapha* is warm -cool. Again, there is a relationship between *Agni* and *Tapman* of the *Nadi*, for instance a person with *Tikshan Agni* will have a hot sharp pulse.

Kathinya- *Kathinya* is determined by the consistency of the vessel wall, which may be seen between the corresponding finger and the radial artery. It is rough and hard in *Vata Nadi*, elastic and flexible in *Pitta* and soft in *Kapha Nadi*. It can be determined by palpating the radial artery between the finger and the radial bone. It can be compared with the Arterial stiffness, which is measured by the stiffness index SI.

The study found that *Pitta-Pradhan Nadi* showed a significantly higher vertical amplitude compared to other groups. The horizontal distance between peaks was maximum in *Kapha-Pradhan Nadi*, reflecting its slow and sluggish nature. The highest number of waveform cycles was observed in *Vata-Pradhan Nadi*, indicating its relatively faster pulse pattern.

Modern advancement in Nadi Parikshan

There are several tools available to concurrently obtain the pulse at the *Tridosha* region, including the *Nadi Tarangini*,^[14] *Nadi Yantra*,^[15] and *Nadi Pariksha Yantra*.^[16] *Naditarangini* is an advanced, evidence-oriented digital *Nadi-parikshana* instrument developed to objectively record and analyse Ayurvedic

pulse parameters. It uses a high-resolution tri-axial pressure sensor system placed on the radial artery at the classical *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* positions. These sensors capture pulse-wave characteristics such as amplitude, rhythm, frequency, pulse-transit variations and waveform morphology with high precision. The device converts these pulse-signals into digital waveforms using an integrated signal-processing algorithm, which filters noise and identifies subtle changes in pulse movement (*Gati*), speed (*Vega*), tension (*Kathinya*), and stability (*Sthirata*). The recorded waveform is displayed graphically, allowing practitioners and researchers to visualise the pulse in real time and compare *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*-dominant patterns. The primary purpose of *Naditarangini* is to link classical Ayurvedic pulse knowledge with measurable biomedical parameters, by correlating traditional findings with heart-rate variability (HRV), pulse-rate, arterial stiffness indices, and waveform features. Thus, *Naditarangini* represents an important step toward modernising traditional pulse examination. Various non-invasive methods have been developed in modern science using central and peripheral arteries, most commonly through pulse wave velocity (PWV) and the stiffness index (SI). The carotid-femoral PWV (cfPWV) technique is considered the gold standard for assessing arterial stiffness. It measures the time taken for the pulse to travel between the carotid and femoral arteries relative to the distance between them. Although, cfPWV requires skilled and accurate distance measurement. Several devices such as Complior, SphygmoCor, PulsePen, Vasera, and Vicorder are used to record cfPWV through pressure transducers or tonometry.

The brachial-ankle PWV (baPWV) method offers a simpler alternative. It uses volume plethysmographic sensors placed on the brachial and ankle regions, and estimates arterial path length from the subject's height. This reduces measurement complexity and has made baPWV popular in clinical studies, although height-based calculations may overestimate true PWV. Arterial stiffness can also be evaluated from the radial artery by calculating the stiffness index (SI), derived from the time difference between systolic and diastolic peaks in the pulse waveform

Asadhya Nadi

When *Nadi* is displaced from its natural location and moves slowly, it is a sign that the patient has a bad prognosis and will eventually pass away. The patient is likely to die by weak and cold pulsation. When a *Nadi* pulses like *Pittaja gati* at first, then *Vata gati*, then *Kapha gati*, and moves like a *Chakra* (wheel), sometimes fast and other times slowly, it should be

regarded as *Asadhya Nadi*. The *Mrityusuchaka Nadi*, is similar to the *Damaru* (a musical instrument) in that it is strong at the beginning and end but very slow in between. These are example of *Asadhya Nadi*.

DISCUSSION

Nadi Pariksha has been used in Ayurveda for thousands of years, and classical texts have highlighted the importance of *Nadi* in the diagnosis and prognosis of ailments. It uses the conventional parameters like *Gati*, *Vega*, *Kathinya* etc to fundamentally explain the nature of *Nadi* and its variations. *Nadi Parikshan* is one amongst the eight *Rogi Parikshan* methods as told by Acharya Yogaratnakar to assess the condition of the body. We can comprehend our body's *Dosha* condition and prognosis through *Nadi Prakishana*, which aids *Vaidyas* in choosing a course of treatment. *Nadi* reveals the stage of pathogenesis that has happened by identifying the organ tissue and *Dosha* involved. *Nadi* may diagnose a specific condition of *Dosha* or *Dhatus*.

Recognising the importance of *Nadi Pariksha* and the need to integrate traditional wisdom with modern scientific methods, tools like *Nadi Tarangini* have been developed. These instruments provide objective, reproducible, and quantifiable pulse data, helping to bridge the gap between classical Ayurvedic pulse assessment and contemporary diagnostic techniques. Such efforts support evidence-based research and strengthen the clinical relevance of *Nadi Pariksha* in modern healthcare.

CONCLUSION

The first step in initiating treatment for any illness is diagnosis. *Ashtavidha Pariksha* is an important method used to diagnose disease and assess the strength of both the disease and the patient. Among its components, *Nadi Pariksha* plays a crucial role. We may conclude from the aforementioned research that *Nadi Pariksha* is a valuable tool for early disease diagnosis.

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