



Review Article

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF NIDANA AND ITS CLINICAL APPROACH- A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW

Raj Kumar Meher^{1*}, Swapna rani Dora², Preeti Gavali³, Surendra Kumar Sharma⁴

¹PG Scholar, Roga Nidana Evam Vikruti Vigyana, ²PG Scholar, Rasa Shastra and Bhaisajya Kalpana

³Assistant Professor, ⁴Professor, Roga Nidana Evam Vikruti Vigyana, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, India.

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a health science that offers a long and healthy life as it aims to prevent oneself from diseases and promote health along with treatment of diseases. Illness can be due to variety of reasons (*Hetu*) and its effect is manifested in the form of symptoms (*Linga*) in which medication/ treatment (*Aushadh*) is important for healing. That is why the concept of *Trisutra* (i.e., *Hetu*, *Linga* and *Aushadha*) have been described in Ayurveda. *Hetu*, similar to the word *Nidana*, means causative factor of a disease. It is the first and most important factor that initiates pathology and is important in diagnosis as well as treatment of the disease. Keeping this in mind, *Acharya Charak* must have said that a physician should first diagnose the disease well. *Chakrapanidutta*, a *Charak-Samhita* commentator, says that effective treatment depends on the right information of *Hetu* and disease process. The word '*Nidana*' in Ayurveda is used mainly in two concepts, namely *Vyadhijanaka nidana* and *Vyadhibodhak nidana*. *Vyadhijanaka nidana* are the etiological features of the disease whereas *Vyadhibodhak nidana* are ways of diagnosis. Knowledge of *Nidana* in both senses is essential for a good physician to be successful. A physician who begins treatment without a proper diagnosis of disease can achieve something only by accidentally. Diagnosis will never finish without specifying all the features related to the disease. This article is humble attempt by the author to enlighten the concept of *Nidana* and its importance in clinical practice.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is science of life and has basic fundamental principle as '*Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanama Aturasya Vikar Prashamanam*, to maintain or sustain the health of a healthy individual and to treat the diseased person.^[1] Diseases may result due to various causes and its effects are seen in form of symptoms of the disease and then *Ausadha kalpana* is necessary to treat the disease. Same concept has been described in Ayurveda by the name of *Trisutra* i.e., *Hetu*, *Linga* and *Ausadha*.^[2] *Hetu* and *Linga* are meant for diagnostic purposes whereas *Ausadha* is for therapeutic purpose.

Hetu is same as *Nidana*. *Nidana* is the first and foremost element that initiates pathology and is extremely important not only for diagnosis but for treatment also.

In Ayurvedic classical texts, examination approach is comprised in two types- *Rogi Pariksha* and *Roga Pariksha*. *Roga Pariksha* means examination of the disease and *Rogi Pariksha* means examination of the patient. Ayurveda emphasizes several approaches for the diagnosis of the disease and concept of *Nidana panchak* is one such modality of Ayurveda. Etiological factors mainly affect *Doshas*, *Dhatu*, *Mala* and then lead to pathological manifestations inside the body in the form of signs and symptoms of illness.

According to *Acharya Chakrapani*, *Nidana* is of two type i.e., *Vyadhi-janaka nidana* and *Vyadhi-bhodhaka nidana*. *Vyadhi-janaka nidana* are susceptible cause of a particular disease and *Vyadhi-bhodhaka nidana* are the *Nidana* which helps in diagnosis of diseases.^[3] *Nidana*, *Dosha* and *Dushya* plays an important role in the manifestation of each

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and every disease. In this context, *Nidana* refers to etiological factors including poor diet, lifestyle and other external factors. *Dosha* are considered as *Samavayi karan* for all diseases and *Dushya* and *Malas* are tormented by these *Doshas*. Diagnosis is never complete without the elucidation of all the factors related with the illness.

Derivation and Etymology

Nidana means beginning point of the disease. *Nidana* is the fundamental cause (*Adikaran*) like *Beej* (seed) is the *Nidana* (source/cause) for *Ankura* (sprouts). No disease exists without *Nidana* e.g., excessive smoking and alcohol consumption causes bronchitis and liver disorders then excessive smoking and alcohol consumption are said to be the *Nidana* of these two specific diseases, respectively.

Nidana word has been defined as the entity by which something is produced specifically. It can be defined as *Adikarana* means 'Mukhya karana' i.e., main cause. It can be used in medical science in the sense of causes or reasons for initiating disease/diseases. [4]

Definition

The word *Nidana* has been used in the following contexts-

- It has been discussed in *Madhukosha Teeka* that the subject which causes production of any disease are called as *Nidana*. It is the process by which diseases are diagnosed. Further *Acharya Vijayarakshita* has given a definition that which gives complete knowledge about *Vyadhi* is known as *Nidana*. [5] Hence, word *Nidana* is used in two different contexts one is etiological factors (*Vyadhi-janaka*) and other one for diagnosis of diseases (*Vyadhi-bhodhaka*).
- It has been discussed in *Ashtanga-Samgraha* that aggravated *Vatadi doshas* are *Nidana* for the formation of a disease. This is due to excessive intake of unwholesome diet and improper activities. [6] *Nidana* are also discussed as external etiological factors. [7] These factors either cause disturbance in the equilibrium of *Dhatu*s or directly originate various disorders. In this way *Nidana* is of two types. The first one is the cause of endogenous diseases and another is the cause of exogenous diseases.

Synonyms

According to *Acharya Charaka*, synonyms of *Nidana* are *Hetu*, *Nimitta*, *Ayatana*, *Karta*, *Karana*, *Pratyaya* and *Samutthana*. [8] *Acharya Vridha Vagbhata* has added two more synonyms of the term *Nidana* i.e., *Yoni* and *Moolam*. [9]

Synonyms of *Nidana* and their respective meanings-

- **Hetu**- It means the cause.

- **Nimitta**- Apart from the cause, it gives the meaning of *Shakuna* also.
- **Ayatana**- This word stands for *Karana* which means the site or region which gives shelter. *Ayatana* word is widely used in *Sutrasthana* in the context of the cause of the diseases.
- **Karta**- The one who is doer.
- **Karana**- Means the primary cause.
- **Pratyaya**- It is used in the sense of faith. But in context of *Nidana*, it means cause of a disease.
- **Samutthana**- It gives meaning by which something gets originated. It is used in the sense of 'Unnati' means progress or development.
- **Nidana**- *Amarakosha* has stated that it is the initial cause of disease which gives the meaning as *nishchaya*. [10] *Nidana* is the cause (origin) and is mentioned very first among *Nidana-panchaka*.
- **Karak**- Intention to the cause
- **Moola**- Origin/basic source
- **Yoni**- Origin/ source
- **Nibandhana**- Foundation cause/origin [11]

In context of disease production, *Nidana* acts in three phases. i.e.,

- **Samavayi Karana** (aggravation of *Doshas*) - *Dosha vaishamyaya* i.e., imbalance in *Doshas*.
- **Asamvayi Karana** - *Dosha-Dushya samurchhana* i.e., combination of *Dosha* and *Dushya*.
- **Nimitta Karana**- *Mithya ahar vihar* (due to deviation in diet/food, lifestyle or micro organism invasion). [12]

Classification of Nidana

According to *Acharya Charak*, following three types of *Nidana* are there- [13]

1. **Asatmendriyarthasamyoga**- Improper attachment or unwholesome contact of five sense organ (*Panch gyanendriyas*) with their object in *Atiyoga* (excessive contact), *Hinayoga* (less or deficient contact), *Mithya yoga* (incorrect/improper contact).
2. **Pragyaparadh**- Improper/disturbed co-ordination between *Kaya* (body), *Mana* (mind) and *Vak* (speech) is called as *Pragyaparadh* (misuse of intellect).
3. **Parinam**- It means *Kala* (seasonal variations). It is seasonal consequences or climate change which may be the reason for *Roga utpatti*.

Acharya Madhukosh has mentioned different classifications of *Nidana*. Descriptions are given below. [14]

Sannikrista- Viprakrista- Vyabhichari- Pradhanika Hetu

- **Sanniakrusta Nidana** means nearby causes which directly connect with aggravation of *Doshas* or

formation of *Roga* e.g. *Ruksha ahar* increases *Vata dosha*, *Kapha* increases in early day time likewise *pitta* and *Vata dosha* increase in middle and end time of the day, respectively.

- **Viprakrista Nidana** means faraway or distant/ late causes which do not have any direct connection with production of any illness e.g. *Kapha dosha* gets accumulated in *Hemant ritu* and gets aggravated in *Vasant ritu*.
- **Vyabhichari Nidana** means weak or incapable causes which cannot harm the body or are inadequate for causing any side effect. Occurrence or non-occurrence of the disease mainly depends on immunity power of the individuals.
- **Pradhanika Nidana** means powerful or strong causes which quickly show their effects on body i.e. poison, any external injuries.

Bahya-Abhyantara Hetu

- **Bahya Hetu** is the causes which are external to the body like microorganisms, injuries, climate, diet-lifestyle etc.
- **Abhyantara Hetu** means internal factor of the body like *Doshas*, *Dhatus*, *Malas*, immune mechanism etc.

Dosha- Vyadhi- Ubhaya Hetu

- **Dosha Hetu** are those factors which are responsible for disequilibrium of *Dosha* inside the body e.g. seasonal aggravation of *Dosha* in which *Madhur rasa* increases *Kapha dosha* in *Hemanta ritu*.
- **Vyadhi Hetu** are those factors which causes formation of sickness by specific etiological factor like *Pandu roga* arises by *Mrutika bhakshan* (intake of soil).
- **Ubhaya Hetu** are those where *Dosha* gets aggravated and in the same time disease also produce/manifest e.g., *Vatarakta* disease occurs by indulging in both these causes - *Vidahi annapana* as well as travelling on horse, camel, elephant etc.

Prakrit-Vaikrit Hetu

- **Prakrit Hetu** means natural causes which aggravates *Dosha* e.g. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha dosha* aggravation in *Varsha*, *Sharad* and *Vasant ritu*, respectively.
- **Vaikrit Hetu** means where *Dosha prakopa* occurs irrespective of their seasonal effects e.g., *Pitta* or *Vata* aggravation in *Vasant ritu*.

Utpadak-Vyanjak Hetu

- **Utpadak Hetu**- It means accumulation of *Dosha* in their respective season e.g., *Kapha dosha* in *Hemanta ritu*. It may be compared with predisposing factor. As we can see the development of renal problems in long run hypertensive cases.
- **Vyanjak Hetu** means exciting cause which stimulates the development of disease e.g.,

improper diet, lifestyle and stress in diabetes mellitus.

Samanya -Vishista Hetu

- **Samanya Hetu** means general etiological factors e.g. bacteria cause throat infection, urinary tract infection, tuberculosis etc.
- **Vishista Hetu** means specific cause like salmonella typhi in enteric fever, leprosy by mycobacterium leprae etc.

Anubandhya - Anubandha Hetu

- **Anubandhya Hetu** means prime cause of a disease e.g. malaria by plasmodium.
- **Anubandha Hetu** means secondary or dependant cause of a disease e.g. if mycobacterium is primary cause of TB, then unhygienic conditions, humid climate and overcrowded population are the secondary causes for it.

Mechanisms Related to Nidana

1. **Hetu Sankar**- If many diseases are produced or manifested because of any one specific *Hetu* or factor then it is referred as *Hetu sankar* e.g. Unhygienic or unhealthy environment may cause disorders like tuberculosis, typhoid, hepatitis, rheumatic fever depending upon exposure, *Prakriti* and immunity of the patients.

2. **Vridhhi-Kshaya-Sthana**

- **Vridhhi** - Increase in *Doshas* due to involvement of causative factors.
- **Kshyaya**- Diminish vitiation of *Doshas* due to causes.
- **Sthana**- Accumulation of *Dosha* at its own site due to its *Hetu* involvement.

3. **Urdhwaga-Adhoga-Tiryak**

- **Urdhwaga**- Vitiation of *Dosha* takes place in upward direction.
- **Adhoga**- Vitiation of *Dosha* takes place in downward direction.
- **Tiryak**- Vitiation of *Dosha* takes place in any direction.

4. **Ashayaupakarsha Hetu**- When normal *Pitta* or *kapha doshas* moves from its own place under the influence of *Vata dosha* and produces sickness. It means that here *Prakrit dosha* moves to another site which is not its normal place then it becomes *Aprakrit* or *Vikrit* as the site is not helpful to that particular *Dosha*.

Theories associated with Nidana

1. **Trisutra (Hetu-Linga-Ausadha)**- Knowledge of *Trisutra* helps in fulfilling the primary objectives of Ayurveda and to gain *Purusartha chatustaya* (*dharma-artha-kama-moksha*).
2. **Nidana Panchak**- It includes *Nidana*, *Purvarupa*, *Rupa*, *Upasaya* and *Samprapti*. It is one of the most

important methods to diagnose a disease, its course and also its prognosis. It is *Roga pariksha* used for proper identification and examination of a disease for its *Dosha, Dushya, Lakshan, Sadhyaasashyata* etc.

3. **Nidana Parivarjan-** It is the first and foremost way to get away from any illness. *Hetu* is the prime factor for the formation of any disease. That's why both *Acharyas, Charak* and *Sushruta* have advised to prevent the etiological factors and it is the primary step in the management of any disease.

4. **Prakriti Samasamaveta and Vikriti Vishamasamaveta Siddhant**

- *Prakriti sama samavetha* describes the interaction between *Rasa* in *Dravya* and *Doshas* in *Vyadhi* resulting in the same individual effect that *Rasa* and *Dosha* build, respectively.^[15]
- *Madhav Nidana* has described that the factor which causes vitiation of *Dosha* involved in formation of a particular disease can be correlated with *Prakriti Samasamaveta Siddhant*. Therefore, here the effect of *Dravya* can be known by analysing the effect of individual *Rasa* forming the *Dravya* and the effect of *Vyadhi* can be understood by analysing the effect of individual *Doshas* forming the *Vyadhi*. This concept is based on *Satkaryavaad*.
- Similarly, *Vikriti vishama samaveta* explains the interaction between *Rasa* in *Dravya* and *Doshas* in *Vyadhi* as a result of which a completely new and not similar to the original *Rasa* and *Dosha* forming them is formed, respectively. Here, the effect of *Dravya* cannot be understood by analysing the effect of individual *Rasa* forming the *Dravya* and the effect of *Vyadhi* cannot be known by analysing the effect of particular *Dosha* forming the *Vyadhi*.^[16] Therefore this new and unpredicted result cannot be concluded from the cause. This concept is based on *Asatkaryavaad*.

Clinical Importance of Nidana in Ayurveda

- Knowledge about causative factors of a disease (*Nidana*) helps the physician in better identification of the disease.
- Proper knowledge of *Nidana panchak* (*Nidana, Purvaroop, Roop, Upashaya, Samprapti*) makes it easy to plan the treatment accordingly.
- *Hetu* gives an idea to diagnose the disease and sometime it gives some clue to predict the forthcoming complication. Early diagnosis prevents further complications of diseases.
- Proper knowledge of *Nidana* helps to identify the exact cause of the disease. If the reason behind the diseases cannot get identified then treatment of the disease cannot be planned.

- *Acharya Shushruta* has described the *Siddhant* mentioned as "*Sankshepatah Kriyayoge Nidana Parivarjanam*." It means *Nidana Parivarjan* itself is a type of treatment. The first and foremost treatment of all ailments is to avoid the causative factors which are responsible for the production of disease and it becomes primary step to prevent further pathogenesis and complications.^[17] Giving an example for differential diagnosis between *Udar roga* and its types *Yakrtodar*. *Acharya Sushruta* has explained that with the change of diet, regimen *Nidana parivarjana* is the perfect way to treat the disease.^[18]
- Some diseases are having same prodromal symptoms (*Purvaroop*) like *Kushtha* and *Premeha*. So, a physician should take the help of *Nidana* for accurate diagnosis.
- For prognosis- *Nidana* also helps in the prognosis of the disease. If the diseases causing factor/factors are less effective, moderately effective and very effective then the disease produced would be is *Sadhya* (curable), *Kricha Sadhya* (curable with difficulty) and *Asadhya* (incurable), respectively.^[19]
- The knowledge about disease causing factors helps the patient to remain away from sickness and avoidance of such factor prevents disease progression.
- Knowledge of *Nidana* helps to fix them accordingly. Lifestyle modifications can be adopted as required for present *Doshic* disturbances in the body and thus aborting diseases before they get manifested or produce further complications.
- Knowledge of *Nidana* helps in planning *Dosha pratyani chikitsa* as particular *Nidana* may vitiate particular *Dosha* and disease. Thus, providing *Chikitsa* and *Ausadha kalpana* which are antagonistic for particular vitiated *Dosha* can diminish the disease.
- Knowledge of *Nidana* sometime helps in speculation of outcomes about the vitiated *Vatadi doshas*, nature of diseases, *Upadrava*, chronicity of diseases etc.
- Understanding of *Nidana* helps a physician to counsel the patient to keep away the factors, foods and activities which are unwholesome for them. Not only will it help to establish a proper treatment protocol but it will also help to develop a healthy diet and lifestyle where many other diseases can be avoided while pursuing healthy living habits.

CONCLUSION

At the end it can be concluded that *Nidana* is not that simple and less important concept. It is utmost notable as it helps in identifying the cause of the disease, helps in diagnosis of disease, alerts for the forthcoming complications, helps in differential diagnosis as well as prognosis of diseases. Knowledge of *Nidana* helps in proper planning of the treatment as *Nidana parivarjan* itself is said to be the first and foremost treatment of any illness. Hence, concept of *Nidana* should be very clear in mind and should be applied wisely in clinical practice as it holds a significant as well as extensive role in disease process and its treatment and prevention.

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***Address for correspondence**

Dr. Raj Kumar Meher

PG Scholar,

Department of Roga Nidana

Evam Vikruti Vigyana,

National Institute of Ayurveda,

Jaipur.

Email: raj9777207784@gmail.com

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