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## REVIEW ARTICLE

## Review on Nadi Pareeksha

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## ABSTRACT:

*Nadi Pareeksha* (Pulse examination) is one of the diagnostic tool in *Ayurveda* mentioned under *Astasthan Rogi Pareeksha* (eightfold examination). Although the term *Nadi* has been frequently used in *Breehatrayee*, its use as a diagnostic tool has been mentioned first by *Sharangadhara*. There are evidence of practice of *Nadi Pareeksha* by folklore practioners, *hakims* and *vaidyas*. The knowledge of this practice has been passed from generation to generation from father to son or through *guru shisya parampara*, limiting the wisdom to certain population. The treatise in *Ayurveda* lacks systemic and elaborative description of methods on *Nadi Pareeksha*. A collective approach of methods mentioned in classics helps to draw an insight into systemic understanding of the procedure of carrying out *Nadi Pareeksha*.

**Keywords:** *Nadi Pareeksha*, *Astasthan Pareeksha*, Pulse examination

## INTRODUCTION

The term *Nadi* is defined as “*Sirayam kayasthsiraswarupa bhedadikam*”, which means *Nadi* is a type of blood vessels.<sup>1</sup> *Snayu*, *Nadi*, *Hamsi*, *Dhamani*, *Dharani*, *Dharaa*, *Tantuki*, *Jeevanjnana* are some of the synonyms of *Nadi*.<sup>2</sup> *Nadi Pareeksha* is one among the *Astasthan Rogi Pareeksha*. There are no references of *Nadi Pareeksha* as a diagnostic tool mentioned in *Breehatrayee*. However, the descriptions regarding the characteristics of *Nadi* as *Arista Lakshanas* is found in *Indriyasthan* in *Breehatrayee*. Apart from this, the use of term *Nadi* has been abundantly described in classics, but with the meaning apart from *Nadi Pareeksha*.<sup>3</sup> *Sharangadhara Samhita* (13th century) was first to mention *Nadi Pareeksha* as a diagnostic tool. It has been described in 3rd chapter of first part of *Samhita* in 8 verses.<sup>4</sup> *Bhavaprakasha* (16th century) has mentioned *Nadi Pareeksha* in 6th specified subdivision of the first part under the heading “*Rogi Pareeksha*”, in 12 verse.<sup>5</sup> *Yogaratanakara* (18th century) has mentioned *Nadi Pareeksha* in 48 verse, in the first chapter under the heading *Rogi Pareeksha*.<sup>6</sup> *Basavarajeeyam* (16-17<sup>th</sup> century) has mentioned *Nadi Pareeksha* in 42 verse, in the

first chapter while describing *Jwara*.<sup>7</sup> Apart from these literatures in *Ayurveda*, more detailed explanation on *Nadi Pareeksha* is found in ‘*Nadi Vijnana*’ by *Kannada* and ‘*Nadi Pareeksha*’ by *Ravan* are also important treatise on *Nadi Pareeksha*. *Kanaada* appears to be a tantric explains *Nadi Pareeksha* in 116 verses. No data is available as to decide when *Kanaada* came into existence. Like *Kanaada*, period of *Ravana* also remains unknown. He describes *Nadi Pareeksha* in detail in 96 verses. Like any other diagnostic procedures, *Nadi Pareeksha* also has its own methods to be followed. These treatises lacks the systemic description of methodology on *Nadi Pareeksha*. A collective approach from these treatises help to create an overview on methodology.

## METHODS

This article is based on collective review on methodology of *Nadi Pareeksha* described by *Sharangadhara*, *Yogaratanakara*, *Basavarajeeyam*, *Kanaada* and *Ravana*.

## DISCUSSION

**Purva Karma:** Both the patient and examiner need to be prepared for *Nadi Pareeksha*. The physician should be *Sthirachitta* (stable in mind) and *Prasannatma* (free from emotional

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Submitted: 17.04.2020

Received: 19.04.2020

Revised: 14.06.2020

Accepted: 22.06.2020

disturbances).<sup>8</sup> The patient needs to be calm and relaxed too. *Nadi pareeksha* is to be avoided immediately after bath, food, *Sneha* (oleation), *Sweda* (sudation), *Vyayama* (exercise), *Shrama* (physical activity), *Aatapa sevana* (exposure to temperature), *Pavanabhyasa* (exposure to wind), at the time of hunger, fasting, thirst, crying, at state of sleep, intake of alcohol, *Matibhramsa* (unsatable mind), *Apasmara*.<sup>9, 10</sup>

**Pradhana Karma (Site of examination):** The *Dhamani* at root of the thumb also known as *Jeevasakshini*, is the site of examination. In females the *Nadi* are upwards and in males *Nadi* are downwards.<sup>11</sup> Thus, in case of male; right hand is to be taken for examination and left hand in case of females. Other than root of the thumb, other parts of body such as right leg in case of male and left leg in case of females are also mentioned as site of examination. Apart from hands and legs, Ravana has mentioned: *Kantha* (Throat) *Nadi*, *Nasa* (Nasal) *Nadi*, *Akshi* (Eyes) *Nadi*, *Karna* (Ears) *Nadi*, *Jihwa* (Tongue) *Nadi* and *Medra* (Penile) *Nadi*. *Basavarajeeyam* describes *Hasta* (Hand) *Nadi*, *Pada* (Legs) *Nadi*, *Kantha Nadi* and *Nasagata* (Nasal) *Nadi* as centers of *Prana Vayu*. Among these *Nadi* he has given specification for each of the *Nadi*. *Pada Nadi* reveals *Ayu* (Life), *Sarira Laghava* (Lightness of body), *Swasthata* (Health), *Jwara Vimochana* (Elimination of fever). *Hasta Nadi* reveals about status of *Vata-Pitta-Kapha Dosha*, appetite, fever. *Kantha Nadi* reveals *Agantuja jwara* (Exogenous fever), *Trishna* (Thirst), *Bhaya* (Fear), *Krodha* (Anger), *Shoka* (Sorrow). *Nasa Nadi* reveals about *Maranam* (Death), *Jeevitam* (Life), *Kama* (Lust), *Netra roga* (Eye disease), *Sira roga* (Disease of head), *Mukha roga* (Disease of mouth).

**Position of Nadi at root of thumb:** the pulsation at one finger distance from root of the thumb should be examined carefully. In the leg, pulsation at one finger below the great toe and also below the malleoli towards the side of the great toe, should be examined. Position of hands for examination: hand of patients should be bent slightly downward; elbow should be extended slightly towards left, fingers should be dispersed.<sup>12</sup> Patient's hand should be supported by left hand. During examination, the physician should rub slowly with his left hand on the portion of the elbow of the patient, where the *Nadi* becomes prominent.<sup>13</sup> Again, putting the three fingers of his right hand at the root of the thumb of the patient, examine the pulse of *Vata* and the other *Doshas*. Examination should be done by three fingers by applying his knowledge gained from the classical literature of the subject, tradition and his self-experience.<sup>14</sup> Among the three fingers, the index finger is to be kept at root of thumb, followed by middle finger and ring finger. The *Nadi* has to be pressed and released three times.<sup>15</sup> To know the *Dosha* predominance/*Vaishamya*, each *dosha* has been assigned with one finger. *Vata Dosha* is felt under index finger, *Pitta Dosha* under middle finger and *Kapha Dosha* under ring finger. *Dwandwaja Dosha* predominance of *Vata* and *Pitta* is felt under index and middle finger, *Vata* and *Kapha* is felt under index and ring finger and *Pitta* and *Kapha* is felt under middle and ring finger. *Sannipataja*

*Dosha* is felt under all three fingers. Time of examination: In the morning *Prahara* (early morning three hours) after being free from his daily routine, the physician should examine the *Nadi*.<sup>16, 17</sup> Procedure after *Nadi Pareeksha*: After examination of *Nadi Pareeksha*, the physician should wash his hand.<sup>18</sup> *Nadi* has been described as channels through which *prana*, *dosha*, *dhatu*s circulate. *Nadi* is influenced by gross and subtle changes occurring at physical and mental level. Thus, both physician and patient need to be calm at the time of examination. A physician requires to be mentally and emotionally stable, have a good concentration and memory which would enable him to discriminate and feel the subtle changes generated in the pulsation. A regular practice of *yoga*, *pranayama* and meditation needs to be adopted for this. The physiological adaptation of cardiovascular system and change in heart rate in response to ingestions of food, dehydration, exposure to temperature, exercise explains the probable reasons why *Nadi Pareeksha* is to be avoided immediately after food, bath, exercise, on exposure to hot climate, at time of hunger, thirst and sleep. There are different sites described for *Nadi Pareeksha* and pulse examination but due to convenience; superficially located, easily accessible root of the thumb (radial artery) is chosen as the appropriate site for examination. According to yogic philosophy, male energy is dominant on the right side of the body and female energy is dominant on the left side of the body, this could be the probable reason for difference in site of examination for male and female patients. In pulse examination the finger should be closest to the heart is used to occlude the pulse pressure; the middle finger is used to get a crude estimate of blood pressure and the finger most distal to the heart is used to nullify the effect of ulnar pulse where the two arteries are connected via palmar arches. The nerve endings of index finger perceives the best qualities of *vata* (light, subtle, mobile, dry, rough) similarly middle finger for *pitta* and ring finger for *kapha*. *Tridosha* flows through the *nadi* and as there is diurnal variation of *tridosha*, in order to avoid the influence of diurnal *dosha* variation, early morning hours is considered the best for *Nadi Pareeksha*.

## CONCLUSION

*Nadi Pareeksha* is a diagnostic tool in Ayurveda, the treatises of *Ayurveda* lacks systemic and elaborative description of methodology on *Nadi Pareeksha*. There are evidence of practice of *Nadi Pareeksha* by folklore practioners, hakims, vaidyas. The knowledge of this practice has been passed from generation to generation from father to son or through *guru shisya parampara*, limiting the wisdom to few people. A collective approach of methodologies mentioned in the classics help to draw an insight into systemic understanding of the procedure of carrying out *Nadi Pareeksha*.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Not Applicable

**ABBREVIATIONS:** Not Applicable

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

**SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** None

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### How to cite this article:

Maharjan S, Ajantha. (2020). Review on Nadi Pareeksha, Journal of Ayurveda Campus; 1(1):61-63.