

## Nadi Parikshan: Ancient Science of Pulse in Ayurveda

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### Abstract

*Nadi Parikshan* (pulse diagnosis) is regarded as one of the greatest diagnostic methods in *Ayurveda*, used to assess the status of health in a person by studying the pulse, namely, its rhythm, strength, and flow. The word "*Nadi*" refers to the pulse and "*Parikshan*" means examination. This non-invasive form of diagnosis gives an idea of the balance of *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) and the physical and mental status of a person. Practitioners from the *Ayurvedic* point of view consider it a strong tool for diagnosing imbalances even before they get apparent in the form of symptoms of disease.

**Keywords :-** *Nadi Parikshan*, *Nadi*, *Parikshan*.

### Historical Background and Significance

*Nadi Parikshan* is indeed referred to in ancient texts like the *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, even the ancient physicians described how one could think of a pulse as a source that would reveal information about an individual's inner health<sup>1</sup>. The process was transmitted down through generations of *Ayurvedic* practitioners until it became part of diagnosis and prognosis in *Ayurveda*.

It has been used not only to diagnose some physical ailment but also to understand the constitution of a person, the current state of *dosha* imbalance, and power of their digestive fire. This gives a holistic view about the body, mind, and spirit and personalized treatment protocols.

### Methodology of *Nadi Parikshan*

**Pulse Sites:** The *Nadi* is often taken on the radial pulse site, on the wrist. *Ayurvedic* physicians use three fingers (index, middle and ring) to take pulse at designated sites, corresponding to one *dosha* per finger<sup>2</sup>.

*Vata* Pulse site-( Index Finger) At the base of the thumb. It is generally irregular, fast and feeble, like the motion of a serpent.

*Pitta* Pulse (Middle Finger): Proximal to the mid-level of the wrist, *Pitta* pulse is strong, rhythmic, and forceful in its movement, as that of a frog.

*Kapha* Pulse (Ring Finger): Most proximal to the wrist, *Kapha* pulse is slow, steady, and deep, like the movement of a swan or a dove.

Each of these pulses carries vital information about the *Prakriti* and the *Vikriti* of the individual.

**Time of Examination:** *Ayurvedic* texts also mention that *Nadi Parikshan* should be carried out at the earliest in the morning on an empty stomach to have the most accurate reading of the pulse<sup>3</sup>. The practitioner's calmness and concentration in this process are also considered to be essential to extract accurate information from the pulse.

### ***Nadi Parikshan* and Diagnostic Insights**

**1. Dosha Imbalances:** The vast majority of the applications of *Nadi Parikshan* is done with the intent of identifying which of the three *doshas*, namely *Vata*, *Pitta* or *Kapha*, that is deranged. Derangement in all these forms lays the basis of most diseases in *Ayurvedic* philosophy. Each *dosha's* pulse has its own characteristic features:

- A *Vata* dominant pulse may feel unsteady, fast and thin which would signify nervous system disorders, anxiety, constipation or gas.
- The *Pitta* dominating pulse is hard and forceful that may indicate inflammation, fever, hyperacidity or cutaneous diseases.
- A *Kapha* dominant pulse is slow, steady and strong which would always indicate respiratory disease, congestion, and sluggish metabolism.

**2. Health and Disease Assessment:** Good, bad and weak pulse diagnosis will reveal not only what diseases are present but also what diseases a person is more likely to get in the future. The implications of a low vitality or immune weakness may be reflected in a weakened pulse<sup>4</sup>.

**3. Knowledge regarding the functions of Organs:** Besides the above understanding about the *doshic* imbalances *Nadi Parikshan* throws some light on the functioning of many organs. The certain patterns observed in the pulse of the patient allow a practitioner to know the status of vital body organs, that is, the heart, liver, kidneys, and digestive system<sup>5</sup>.

**4. Emotional and Mental Condition:** The pulse may also indicate emotional and mental state. For instance, sharp pulse and irregular rhythm may point towards stress or anxiety, and a heavy, slow pulse can reflect depression or lethargy<sup>6</sup>.

**5. Stage of Disease:** *Ayurveda* holds the view that diseases have six stages. Its scale runs from the initial *doshic* imbalance up to full-blown disease. *Nadi Parikshan* informs practitioners about the stage of the disease, which enables the possibility of early intervention<sup>7</sup>.

### **Benefits of *Nadi Parikshan***

**1. Non-invasive and Safe:** Most other modern diagnostic methods do not compare with *Nadi Parikshan's* non-invasive nature, since no instruments or laboratory tests are involved at all. This could, therefore be interpreted as safe, easy, and cost-effective as a diagnostic tool.

**2. Holistic Nature:** The overall view of the *Nadi Parikshan* includes profound insight into every individual's physical and mental as well as spiritual levels. This makes treatments to be formulated individually, curing a disease at its source rather than symptoms.

**3. Preventive Diagnosis:** This is provided because of the imbalances existing through *Nadi Parikshan* before they appear as physical problems, thus enabling prompt intervention and the prevention of disease. The preventive

dimension of *Nadi Parikshan* well fits the intrinsic philosophy of *Ayurveda*, which is: it is better to have health and prevent disease than to treat illness when it has actually occurred<sup>8</sup>.

**4. Treatments of Personalized Design:** *Nadi Parikshan* insights enable *Ayurvedic* practitioners to produce treatments that depend on the specific constitution, lifestyle, and health needs. Such treatments generally include dietary regulation, use of herbs, *yoga*, meditation, and *Panchakarma* therapies that ultimately lead to returning equilibrium or harmony.

### Challenges and Limitations

Despite all these benefits, *Nadi Parikshan* is not free of challenges. The major limitation would be skill and experience needed to carry out this proper diagnosis. The minute differences in the pulse rhythm, speed, and strength require years of training and practice to make correct interpretations<sup>9</sup>. Apart from this, though *Nadi Parikshan* catches the imbalances of the body quite efficiently sometimes, it needs to be supplemented with other modern diagnostic tools for authenticating the diagnosis.

### Conclusion

*Nadi Parikshan* is the most perfect diagnostic tool in *Ayurveda* which gives profound and holistic knowledge regarding the healthiness of an individual. It helps the *Ayurvedic* practitioner in the detection of *dosha* imbalances, organ functionality and their understanding about physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. *Nadi Parikshan*, despite its challenges, still remains a crucial part of the primary and personalized preventive approach of *Ayurveda* for health care. As the world is turning towards alternative and holistic medicine for solutions, the age-old system of pulse diagnosis serves as an epitome of the wisdom of *Ayurveda* and its applicability in the contemporary practice of health.

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