

AN OVERVIEW OF DIAGNOSTIC PRINCIPLES IN AYURVEDA***Dr. Mohini Chandrakant Gosavi**

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ABSTRACT

Diagnosis is a fundamental component of clinical practice, directly influencing treatment outcomes and disease prognosis. Ayurveda presents a unique, holistic, and individualized approach to diagnosis that extends beyond disease identification to include assessment of the patient's constitution (Prakriti), strength (Bala), and underlying pathophysiological mechanisms. The present article aims to systematically compile and explain the core principles of Ayurvedic diagnosis for contemporary understanding and clinical application. Central to Ayurvedic diagnosis is the concept of Tridosha—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—whose imbalance is considered the primary cause of disease. Diagnostic evaluation focuses on identifying the nature, extent, and state of vitiated Doshas along with their interaction with Dushya (tissues), Adhithana (site), and Srotas (body channels). The framework of Nidana Panchaka—

comprising Nidana (etiology), Purvarupa (prodromal features), Rupa (clinical manifestations), Upashaya (therapeutic tests), and Samprapti (pathogenesis)—provides a structured and sequential approach to disease assessment. In addition, Dashavidha Atura Pariksha offers a comprehensive evaluation of patient-specific factors such as Prakriti, Sara, Samhanana, Satva, and Ahara Shakti, which are essential for determining prognosis and planning individualized treatment. The application of Pramana (means of valid knowledge), including Pratyaksha, Anumana, Aptopadesha, and Yukti, further strengthens diagnostic accuracy and clinical reasoning.

This integrative diagnostic approach, combining disease-oriented (Vyadhi Pariksha) and patient-oriented (Atura Pariksha) assessments, enables precise understanding of disease processes and supports the formulation of rational, personalized therapeutic strategies. Thus, Ayurvedic diagnosis remains a comprehensive and clinically relevant system for effective healthcare delivery.

INTRODUCTION

Diagnosis is the art or act of identifying a disease from its signs and symptoms.^[1]

It can also be defined as the act or process of identifying or determining the nature and cause of a disease or injury through evaluation of patient history, examination of a patient, and review of laboratory data.^[2] An accurate diagnosis not only helps in effective treatment but also plays a crucial role in disease prevention, early detection, and minimizing complications. In any healthcare system, the quality of diagnosis directly determines the success of patient management and overall health outcomes. Diagnosis in Ayurveda is unique in many ways. Ayurveda diagnosis doesn't stop at disease level, it also requires diagnosing patients in the aspect of Prakruti and their strength.

The uniqueness of diagnosis in Ayurveda lies in its holistic, individualized, and root cause oriented approach, rather than just identifying a disease label. Identification of disease or its nature is the essential step in medical practice for providing appropriate management.

In Ayurveda Tridosha are considered as a root cause of all diseases specially affecting the body. The Tridosha concept is the root for understanding health and disease.^[4] When they are in a balanced state it is considered as a healthy state, otherwise a diseased state.^[4] Identifying this imbalance is an art every physician must master. But nowadays students and Ayurvedic physicians are not practising that art due to inclination towards the modern medicine concepts. So it is necessary to compile principles of Ayurvedic diagnosis and reproduce it with suitable explanation for students and physicians.

Pramana as a special tools for Ayurvedic Diagnosis^[5,6]

In Ayurveda, Pramana (means of valid knowledge) decides how disease and patient assessment are performed. These epistemological tools are directly related to clinical “pareeksha” (examination), forming the basis of Ayurvedic diagnosis and reasoning.

Types of Pramana and Their Diagnostic Role

1. Aptopadesha (authoritative testimony): Scriptural and expert guidance is the first step to know what diseases, signs, and treatments are possible, and is key for diagnosis, prevention, treatment, and research.
2. Pratyaksha (direct perception): Sensory examination (observation, palpation, etc.) gives direct knowledge of signs and symptoms.
3. Anumana (inference): Uses observed features (linga) to infer hidden processes and disease mechanisms; central to pathogenesis, diagnosis, prognosis, and unknown diseases.
4. Yukti (reasoning/synthesis): Logical planning that combines multiple factors to design individualized treatment and manage disease over time.

Charaka specifies that disease knowledge should be obtained using Aptopadesha, Pratyaksha, and Anumana, with Yukti later included under Anumana for clinical use. He advises examining disease by all these Pramanas together for reliable understanding.

Dashvidh Atur Pariksha^[7]

With the help of above Pramana Vaidya should perform the Dashvidh Pariksha before finalising the management. Amongst these 10 Assessments, Karyadesh (Site of Action that is patient) assessment is considered very important. Hence it is further divided into a 10 fold examination system known as Dashvidh Atur Pariksha.

Dashvidh Atur Pariksha includes

1. Prakriti describes an individual's innate dosha dominance and constitutional traits, used to predict predisposition and tailor long-term regimens.
2. Vikriti detects the current dosha imbalance and disease state, and it is the primary factor for defining the active pathology to be corrected.
3. Sara evaluates the excellence of dhatus (tissues); higher sara indicates better tissue quality and stronger Rogi Bala affecting prognosis and recovery potential.
4. Samhanana assesses body compactness and organ solidity; compactness informs physical strength and tolerance for interventions such as detoxification.
5. Pramana records body measurements and proportions to contextualize normal versus altered states and to assist dose and procedure planning.

6. Satmya gauges dietetic and environmental suitability; knowledge of satmya guides dietary prescriptions and identifies aggravating habits .
7. Satva measures psychological constitution and resilience, which influences compliance, prognosis, and response to therapy
8. Ahara-shakti reflects digestive fire and assimilation capacity; it is central for prescribing diet, drugs, and detox procedures
9. Vyayama-shakti indicates physical work capacity and stamina and helps determine safe intensity of therapies and exercise recommendations.
10. Vaya situates the patient in an age category to adjust expectations about recovery, vulnerability, and treatment intensity.

Dashvidha Atur Pariksha grossly deals with the 2 aspects of disease

1. Knowledge of the span of life (life expectancy)
2. Strength of the patient and the extent of doshas.

Above these aspects will decide the type, potency and quantity of the medicine or treatment.

Nidana Panchaka^[8]

The Nidana Panchaka, a cornerstone of Ayurvedic diagnosis, employs five distinct lenses—cause, prodromal symptoms, clinical signs, therapeutic responsiveness, and disease pathogenesis—to facilitate comprehensive assessment. This framework is essential for early detection, accurate staging, and crafting personalized treatment strategies, providing a structured approach to medical history-taking, physical examination, treatment trials, and prognostication.

The comprehensive framework for understanding and diagnosing disease is structured around five critical elements. These elements are sequentially employed to derive diagnostic information, allowing clinicians to recognize and meticulously characterize a disease process, tracing it from its initial origin to its underlying mechanism of action. By presenting these five components as an integrated system, the process achieves immediate clarity: it precisely articulates the rationale behind collecting each specific piece of diagnostic data and, crucially, illustrates how each successive element systematically refines and narrows the pool of potential differential diagnoses. This methodology ensures a logical, thorough, and efficient diagnostic journey, moving from broad symptomatic presentation to a precise, mechanistic understanding of the patient's condition.

1. **Nidana:** Causative and contributory factors such as diet, habits, environment, and specific etiologies reported in classic texts.
2. **Purvarupa:** Prodromal or premonitory features that precede full disease expression and may be subtle or nonspecific.
3. **Rupa:** Definite clinical manifestations and signs that establish the diagnosis and its stage.
4. **Upashaya:** Therapeutic or investigative tests where response to specific interventions is observed (improvement or worsening).
5. **Samprapti:** Mechanism of disease development detailing dosha involvement, dhatu and srota derangement, and sequence of pathogenesis.

The Panchaka frames Ayurvedic Roga Pariksha (disease examination) by sequencing data collection from exposure to mechanism and response. This systematic approach supports both diagnostic certainty and individualized therapy selection.

- History focus captures Nidana to link exposures with likely doshic pathology and to prioritise reversible causes for immediate correction.
- Prodrome monitoring uses Purvarupa to detect disease early and justify preemptive measures or closer follow up.
- Clinical examination documents Rupa to categorise disease subtype, depth (superficial versus deep), and stage for specific interventions.
- Therapeutic trial via Upashaya is used diagnostically when response to an indicated remedy confirms or refutes suspected doshic dominance.
- Pathogenesis mapping with Samprapti integrates findings to decide on route, intensity, and sequence of treatments and to estimate prognosis.

Diagnosis Of Dosha

As stated earlier, Ayurveda considers Dosha as the single reason behind diseases. Hence it is important to understand Dosha behind Samprapti, which will guide the physician throughout the treatment. Abnormal Dosha can be identified by their characters, deviation from normal function and/or presence of their special features of vruddhi or prakopa. Which is then confirmed with the help of Upashaya. It is important to assess Dosha in various ways, Madhukosha commentary of Madhava Nidana enlists various ways of Dosha assessment, which includes.^[8]

1. Prakruti - Vikruti assessment (Natural vs abnormal)
2. Anubandhya -anubandha assessment (Primary- Associated)

3. Sama-Nirama Assessment
4. Doshagati

5. Avarana (Occlusion)

All these assessments will give a detailed understanding of Vikruta Dosha, its position or direction and type of vikruti. This understanding will guide the physician about how to approach the disease, prognosis and sequence of treatment.

Srotas Examination

Dosh sufficiently imbalanced finds the suitable place in the body called Adhishthana to form the disease process. Adhishthana can be any tissue in the body including organs.^[9] Srotas are channels in the body which not only carry but also produce various tissue forms (Dhatu, Upadhatu etc). Srotas are related to various organs in the body. Which can be Mollasthana of that particular srotas. Each Srotas has its own peculiar properties or distinguishness in treatment. Charaka has given a lot of importance to adhishthana as it decides the type of disease which Vikruta Dosha will create. Srotas Examination not only helps understand disease processes it also aids in deciding prognosis of the disease. Functional abnormalities are easier to treat than structural abnormalities of Srotas.

Ayurveda explains 4 type of srotodushti

1. Atipravrutii
2. Sanga
3. Siragranthi
4. Vimargagamana

Srotas Examination will determine the extent of Srotas vikruti, involvement of Dosha and type of Vikruti.^[10]

There are many other ways of examination which may be relevant at appropriate places. Amongst them well known is Asthasthana Pariksha (8 fold examinations). Which may sometimes aid the diagnosis or may give the complete diagnosis.^[11]

DISCUSSION

In Ayurveda, diagnosis fundamentally revolves around the concept of Dosha, as all physiological and pathological processes are governed by the dynamic equilibrium or imbalance of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. The primary objective of diagnostic evaluation is therefore to identify the nature, extent, and state of vitiated (Vikruta) Doshas. This is

achieved through classical methods of examination such as *Nidana Panchaka*, *Ashtavidha Pariksha*, and *Dashavidha Pariksha*, which collectively provide a multidimensional understanding of disease.

These diagnostic approaches enable the physician to assess not only the presence of doshic imbalance but also its quantitative and qualitative status, including factors such as *Sama–Nirama* (association with Ama), *Utklesha*, *Sthana* (site), and *Avastha* (stage of disease). However, Dosha alone does not determine the clinical manifestation. The interaction of Dosha with Dushya (affected tissues), Adhithana (site of manifestation), and Srotas (body channels) plays a crucial role in shaping the disease entity. These factors collectively influence the type of disease, its progression, prognosis (*Sadhya–Asadhyata*), and therapeutic approach.

The second important dimension of diagnosis focuses on the patient rather than the disease, primarily evaluated through *Dashavidha Atura Pariksha*. This includes assessment of Prakriti, Sara, Samhanana, Pramana, Satmya, Satva, Ahara Shakti, Vyayama Shakti, and Vaya, which together determine the lifespan (*Ayushya*) and strength (*Bala*) of the patient. Such evaluation is essential to understand the patient's capacity to tolerate disease and therapy, thereby ensuring safe and effective management.

Thus, Ayurvedic diagnosis integrates both disease-oriented (*Vyadhi Pariksha*) and patient-oriented (*Atura Pariksha*) perspectives. The former elucidates the pathological state through Dosha–Dushya interactions, while the latter evaluates the host factors that influence disease outcome and therapeutic response.

CONCLUSION

Diagnosis in Ayurveda is a comprehensive and individualized process centered on the assessment of Dosha imbalance and patient strength. The evaluation of Vikruta Dosha, along with Dushya, Adhithana, and Srotas, determines the nature of the disease, its prognosis, and line of management. Simultaneously, assessment through *Dashavidha Atura Pariksha* provides insight into the patient's lifespan and functional capacity.

Together, these two dimensions form the foundation for clinical decision-making, ultimately guiding the selection of treatment choices, course and duration of therapy, choice of

procedures, and appropriate medicines. This integrative approach highlights the uniqueness of Ayurveda in delivering personalized, rational, and effective healthcare.

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