

CLASSICAL BASIS of NÄÏÉ PARÉKÑÄ

by

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An ayurvedic physician, called in different parts of the country variously as Vaidya, Kaviräja, Ärya-vaidyan and even doctor, is generally identified by his ability to diagnose an ailment and suggest remedial measures on the basis of *näðé-parékñä*. Since strict rules, prescribed in texts, to be followed by the patient as well as the physician before such examination, are not practicable in a clinic or hospital, only some superficial examinations are carried out in the stipulated time, but remedies prescribed on the basis of such preliminary examination after interrogation, etc., are also proved to be useful. Perfect and comprehensive *näðé-parékñä* needs deep concentration of mind, which culminates from serious and sincere spiritual practice and long standing experience. Some pseudo-physicians, however, exercise their power of psychic-reading obtained by propitiating evil spirits and claim to have this knowledge of comprehensive *näðé-parékñä*. With their diagnosis, they mystify this subtle science. These physicians do become popular because of their mystic power, but they fail to give appropriate treatment thereby do much harm to ayurvedic profession. Keeping such physicians in view, Kaviraj Gananath Sen, a reputed and scholarly ayurvedic physician, in his Presidential address at the All India Ayurvedic Congress Session in 1931 had said: " I do not hesitate to condemn the superstition that the *näðé* can give all information. In practice, *näðé* should never be ignored but the pretensions of the *näðé* teller should always be avoided." In spite of these perversions, in the past there were ayurvedic physicians who were endowed with this comprehensive knowledge of *näðé-parékñä* and some are still living in isolation.

Näðé-Parékñä versus Pulse Examination

Because of the non-availability of exact equivalent and because in both the cases, examination is carried out generally over the radial artery, among others, *näðé-parékñä* is commonly translated in English as "pulse examination". Thus, the confusion is worst confounded.

According to scriptures every individual (person) is composed of five consecutive *koças* (sheaths) as follows:

- (1) *Anna-maya koça* (the physical body nourished by food and drinks),
- (2) *Präëa-maya koça* (the sheath of *elan vital*),
- (3) *Mano-maya koça* (the sheath of psyche),
- (4) *Viji äna-maya koça* (the sheath of intellect), and
- (5) *Änanda-maya koça* (the sheath of eternal bliss).

The first *koça* is called *sthüla* or *kärya çaréra* (gross body) and the remaining *koças* are called *sükñma* or *käraëa çaréra* (subtle body). In the pulse examination (according to modern medicine) the conditions of the heart and some of the related organs in the *sthüla çaréra* (gross body) are examined.

In the *nāḍē-parékñā* (according to Ayurveda) the conditions of several other vital organs in this gross body are examined. In addition, the conditions of the remaining four subtle *koças* of the individual are also examined. Thus, there is a significant difference between the pulse examination of modern medicine and *nāḍē-parékñā* according to Ayurveda. If this point of difference is ignored and not taken into account, then many topics described in Ayurveda with regard to *nāḍē-parékñā* will appear to be mysterious, superstitious and ridiculous.

Apart from long and sincere practice under the supervision of an accomplished preceptor (*guru*), the physician should have mental concentration and spiritual enlightenment to be successful in his efforts.

Of course, some quacks without having these attributes, do claim to be experts in this field and cheat patients as well as innocent individuals. Then, this quackery should not be construed as the short coming of ayurvedic *nāḍē-parékñā*.

Works on Nāḍē-Parékñā

Works on *nāḍē-parékñā* can be classified into following categories:

- (1) Some old books exclusively dealing with *nāḍē-parékñā* are now available in print.
- (2) Some works on *nāḍē-parékñā* are still in manuscript form in the libraries of the governments and universities as well as individuals.
- (3) *Nāḍē-parékñā* in the form of a chapter in Indo-Tibetan medical works like Jivaka's *Amāta hādaya aññāi ga-guhyopadeça tantra* (18th Cent. B.C) which is available now only in Tibetan language.
- (4) Information about *nāḍē-parékñā* quoted from ancient ayurvedic texts like *Caraka-saàhitā* and *Vāddha Hārēta saàhitā* as follows:

crkat!-ôl[a!iÉ; GvamhStepadevamec yÆt> ,

zaô€[sMàdayn twa SvanÉvñ vĒ

(*Ōḍarānanda Āyurveda Saukhyam: 2:6:4*)

vī harġtat!-SpNdteckmanñ iÇzÖar yda xra ,

SvSwann tda nñ<raçl j lvit naNywa .

iSwTva iSwTva vhit ya sa }ya à["aitnl.

(*Yoga-ratnākara: 1:19*)

- (5) Books on *nāḍē-parékñā* are also written by present day ayurvedic scholars. In these modern works material available in old ayurvedic works are compiled, systematically arranged, translated and commented upon. Some of these authors have made efforts to explain *nāḍē-parékñā* with modern scientific equipments.
- (6) Reference to *nāḍē-parékñā* practised by ayurvedic physicians of India is available in the Travelogue of Itsing (637 B.C.).

Information on these works can be culled from *Āyurveda kā Vaijī ānika Itihāsa*, by Prof. P.V. Sharma and introductions to books like *Nāḍē-tattva-darçana* by Vaidya Satyadeva

Vaṣṇōha and *Nāḍē-parékñā-sara* by Vaidya Gangadhara Ganesa Phanse. Vaidya Phanse in the introduction to his work has referred to many manuscripts on *nāḍē-parékñā*, written by ancient and classical authors of Ayurveda.

Origin of Nāḍē-Parékñā

Many ayurvedic scholars, physicians and historians hold the view that *nāḍē-parékñā* of Ayurveda is not indigenous (classical) but exotic in origin because of the following:

- (1) No description of *nāḍē-parékñā* is available in the extant editions of Ayurvedic classics written and/or redacted by Caraka, Suṣruta and Vāgbhata; and
- (2) The topic of *nāḍē-parékñā* is available according to them, in the earliest work of *Ṣārai gadhara-saḥhitā* (13th Cent. A.C) and subsequent works only.

About the country of its origin their opinions vary from China, Tibet, Greece and to Arab countries. Some of them, to be safe, suggest may be it originated from China, went to Greece and from there came to Arab countries, and thereafter, with Muslim physicians under the patronage of Muslim rulers came to India, where it is practised even today. Though not supported by facts, this type of misleading conclusions are incorporated into the text books and taught in ayurvedic colleges now.

Nature of the Extant Editions of Ayurvedic Classics

The extant editions of ayurvedic classics like *Caraka-saḥhitā* and *Suṣruta-saḥhitā* were compiled (not originally composed) in about 3102 B.C. (5107 years from now) at the beginning of the present Kali age. They were subsequently redacted and avowedly supplemented (because of the nonavailability of the original text) by less authentic authors later. Because of the limitations of writing and printing facilities, the copyists, who were not necessarily ayurvedic scholars, added to this unfortunate confusion. There were many recensions (like *Kāṣmēra-pāḥa*) of *Caraka-saḥhitā* which are quoted by later commentators but these are not available now. What to speak of *Caraka-saḥhitā*, even the Vedas the most sacred books of Aryans, had originally 1131 *ṣākhās* (branches or recensions) of which only ten are surviving now.

Even Vāgbhaḥa's works which were compiled much later did not escape this temporal vicissitudes. *Añḍāi ga-hādaya* which was translated into Tibetan has many different readings, and the extant printed editions of Vāgbhaḥa's works have many variant forms given in the foot-notes.

From amongst many, only one example will suffice to illustrate this condition. Three *doḥas* and five divisions of each are the fundamental concepts of ayurveda. In *Caraka-saḥhitā* we find the five divisions (by names) of *vāyu* only. In *Suṣruta-saḥhitā* along with *vāyu*, names of five divisions of *pitta* are furnished (of course with the suffix *agni*). But in Vāgbhaḥa's work, we find clear description of five divisions of all the three *doḥas*. While describing the authenticity of his work, Vāgbhaḥa emphatically says:

n maṢamaṢmPyṢ ikiĀdagmvij Rm! ,

te-waR s Cnwbnxí sḍ pay 3maeNywa.

(*Añḍāi ga-saḥgraha: Sūtra:1:20*)

This obviously shows that the so called new topic, viz., five divisions of *kapha* were mentioned in the then available ayurvedic classics, but in the extant editions of the classics, this topic got omitted.

In the later compilations–works like *Āyurveda-saukhyam* in *Öödārananda* (16th cent. A.C.) and other commentaries, several quotations are taken from earlier ayurvedic classics which are either not available or available now in mutilated form.

Nāḍē-Parékñā in Ayurvedic Classics

There is clear mention of *nāḍē-parékñā* topic which was available in, and quoted from the then available edition of *Caraka-saḥhitā*. Similarly, *Yoga-ratnākara* has compiled *nāḍē-parékñā* from *Vāddha Hārēta-saḥhitā*, another ayurvedic classic which unfortunately has gone extinct. For details of these classics which are lost and which were available till 1915 maybe seen in the introduction to Phandse's work referred to earlier.

Laghu-Trayé: Compilations from Classics

When India was ravaged by repeated foreign invasions and internal conflicts, original text composition with original thoughts became impossible. From the fragments of the then extant classics, efforts were made by scholars to preserve whatever was then available to them. *Nāḍē-parékñā* texts, thus composed in medieval period, are the outcome of such scholarly efforts. It is because of this, nowhere in the existing works, both published and unpublished, on *nāḍē-parékñā*, there is any mention of fundamental principles of Chinese, Greek and Arabic Medicine. On the other hand they are based on the *tridoṇā* concept of classical Ayurveda.

Nāḍē-parékñā in Jévaka's Work (18th cent. B.C.)

Nāḍē-parékñā (rtsa-brtag) is described in great detail in Jévaka's *Amāta-hādaya-aññāi ga-guhyopadeṣa-tantra*. Lord Buddha lived during 1887 B.C. to 1807 B.C. (and not in 563 to 483 B.C. The chronology of ancient Indian history was deliberately reduced by more than 1200 years by inventing the problem of two Candra-guptas: Candra-gupta Maurya (1534 to 1500 B.C.) was erroneously identified as the contemporary of Alexander (356 to 323 B.C.) where as it was actually the Candra-gupta (326 to 320 B.C.) of the Imperial Gupta dynasty.) Jévaka was Lord Buddha's personal physician. During the life-time of Lord Buddha, medical and such other faculties of Taxila University used to attract students from different parts of the then Bhārata-varṇa and abroad. Jévaka, the son of the King of Magadha took his medical training from this university and because of his proficiency in Ayurveda he was thrice crowned by Lord Buddha as the King of physicians (*Bhīṇak-rāja*). It is this Jivaka who was present in the retinue of Buddhists during the teaching of medicine by Lord Buddha in his emanated form as Āṇi Vidyā-jī āna. It is this Jévaka who is the author of *Rgyud-bzhi*, the brief name meaning *Catus-tantra* of *Amāta-hādaya-aññāi ga-guhyopadeṣa-tantra*. According to Tibetan tradition as enshrined in *Zur-lugs* or the School of Zur-mkhar Mnam-i id-rdo-rje and quoted by the famous commentator of this work Sde-srid Sa'i s-rgyas-rgya-mtsho in his *Khog-'bugs*, *Rgyud-bzhi* was transmitted as follows:

- (1) Ston-pa Sman-gyi-bla (Teacher Bhaiñajya-guru)
- (2) Gsu'i -ba-po Dra'i -sro'i Rig-pa'i Ye ses (Speaker Āṇi Vidyā jī āna)

(3) Sdud-pa-po Draï -sroï Yid-las-skyes (Coordinator Āñi Mansija)

(4) Tsho-byed Gzhon-nu (Kumāra Jēvaka)

According to this lineage of transmission, Chandra-nandana (8th cent. A.D.) taught this text to V(B)airocana and helped the latter in its Tibetan translation. V(B)airocana presented this work to the King of Tibet Khri-sron Lde'u-btsan in the presence of the senior Gyu-thog, among others. Since the time was not auspicious for the propagation of this health-science in Tibet, on the advice of Guru Padma-Sambhava, the translated text was kept hidden (as *gter-ma*) in one of the pillars of the central hall of the upper shrine of Samye monastery near Lhasa. As predicted by the Guru, this work was taken out of this pillar in 1038 A. D. by Gra-pa Mī on-çes and thereafter was widely propagated in Tibet.

The unique feature of *Rgyud-bzhi* is the systematic arrangement of all the ayurvedic topics. All the concepts concerning health, ill-health and therapeutics are presented in the form of a tree having three roots, nine trunks, forty-seven branches and 224 leaves including two flowers and three fruits. *Nāḍē-parēkñā* is described in leaf no. 95, 96 and 97 of the branch no. 15, 16 and 17 of the trunk no. 4 in root B.

The four texts (because of which it is called *Rgyud* or *tantra*, *bzhi* or four) of this work are as follows:

- (1) *Rtsa-rgyud* (San.: *Mūla-tantra*; Eng.: primary text). It has six chapters.
- (2) *Bçad pa'i rgyud* (San.: *Ākhyāta-tantra*; Eng.: explanatory text). It has thirty-one chapters which are grouped into eleven *gnas-s* (San.: *sthāna-s*; Eng.: sections)
- (3) *Man-ī ag rgyud* (San.: *Upadeça-tantra*; Eng.: text of instructions). It has ninety-two chapters which are grouped into fifteen *skabs-s* (San.: *prakaraēa-s*; Eng.: topics).
- (4) *Phyi ma'i rgyud* (San.: *Uttara-tantra*; Eng.: subsidiary text). It has twenty-five chapters which are grouped into four *mdo-s* (San.: *vibhāga-s*; Eng.: divisions).

In addition, there are two concluding chapters. Thus, there are 156 Chapters in this text. *Nāḍē-parēkñā* is described, in brief, in the second chapter of the first text and elaborated in the first chapters of the last text described above.

In the first chapter of the last text, *nāḍē-parēkñā* has been described with reference to 13 sections (topics) as follows:

- (a) Diet and regimen to be followed by the patient and the physician prior to the examination of *nāḍē*;
- (b) The time of examining the *nāḍē*;
- (c) The place (part of the body) where *nāḍē* is to be examined;
- (d) The amount of pressure to be applied over the *nāḍē* for examination;
- (e) Method of *nāḍē* examination;
- (f) The types of constitutional *nāḍē*;
- (g) *Nāḍē* in four seasons with reference to five *dhātus* (*bhūtas*);
- (h) Seven types of super-natural or amazing *nāḍē*-examination done on healthy persons to ascertain the condition of health of another person (*dūta-garbhiēi-nāḍē-parēkñā*);
- (i) Examination of *nāḍē*-beat in an unhealthy and in a healthy person;

- (j) *Nāḍē* examination with reference to general and specific nature of the disease;
- (k) Details of three types of *nāḍē* indicating death (which is essential to know to avoid shameful prediction regarding the span of life and death);
- (l) The examination of *nāḍē* to ascertain affliction by evil spirits; and
- (m) The examination of *nāḍē* to ascertain the span of life (this is called *bla'i rtsa* or *guru- nāḍē*).

This chapter has 370 lines, most of them in verse form.

Nāḍē-parékñā belongs to Rudra Tradition

Caraka and Suçruta belong to *Brāhma sampradāya* or the tradition of Brāhmā. Caraka deals mostly with *kāya-cikitsā* or internal medicine and belongs to Ātreya school. Vāgbhaḥā dealing mostly with *kāya-cikitsā* also belongs to this school. Suçruta, on the other hand, belongs to Dhanvantarē school dealing mostly with *çalya çāstra* or surgery. There is mention of another tradition called *Bhāskaha sampradāya* of which texts are not available. Kaviraj Gananath Sen in his Presidential address to the 11th session of All India Ayurvedic Congress in 1920 has suggested to keep *Rasā-çāstra* school independent of Ātreya and Dhanvantarē schools. This *Rasā-çāstra* school owes its allegiance to Lord Çiva or Rudra. Infact Rudra is offered prayers in the Vedas as the propounder of Ayurveda. In astrology, Çiva's prayer is suggested to propitiate the planet *sūrya* or sun.

According to *Nāḍē-vijī ānam* of Kaēāda, Ayurveda is the fifth Veda which was propounded by Lord Çiva or Rudra.

AaSteved> pÂmaevl* kaOyae
 vÄa kií ÄSy naStemhzat!,
 tSmat! xata=Xyð tSmat! tı araqe
 tSmat! }aTva v´ mhks zaÔ<

(Kaēāda, *Nāḍēvijī ānam*: 2)

Most of the authors of works on *nāḍē-parékñā* like Dattātreya, Rāvaēa and Kaēāda are devotees of Çiva. Siddhas of South India and saints belonging to *Nātha-sampradāya* are the great devotees of Çiva and they have composed many texts on *Rasā-çāstra*, Tantra, Yoga and Ayurveda. Siddha system of medicine itself is stated to have originated from Lord Çiva. This had lead some scholars to suggest that *nāḍē-parékñā* is a part of yoga and tantra. All these sciences originating from the same propounder have some conceptual unity. Therefore, Ayurveda had two different and independent traditions having the same fundamentals. The Brāhma tradition somehow survived, though in mutilated form, but Çiva tradition went into oblivion because of temporal vicissitude. From the remaining fragments of the classics belonging to Çiva or Rudra tradition combining them with the mutilated classics of Brāhma tradition, texts were composed by Çāraī gadhara (13th cent. A.D), among others.

Non-interference with the Other Fields of Speciality

There was a self imposed discipline not to interfere too much or intrude into the fields of others' speciality. Therefore, in *Caraka-saàhitā* and in *Vāddha-Hārīta-saàhitā* the topic of *nāḍē-parékñā* originally belonging to Çiva tradition was described in brief and the subsequent redactors, supplementors and copyists, finding the matter scanty and uninteresting for their branch, ignored or totally omitted these topics in the subsequent editions. There are references to such self imposed abstinence from intruding too much into the field of another speciality even among different schools of Brāhma tradition. Caraka while referring to the surgical treatment of *gulma* (tumours of different types) says:

tÇ xalNvNtirya[amixkar> i³yai vxaĒ,

vĒ*ana<katya&yana<vyxzaxnrap[e.

(*Caraka-saàhitā: Cikitsa 5:44*)

dahe xalNvNtirya[amÇaip iÉ; j a<bl m! ,

] arāyage iÉ; j a<] artÛivda<bl m!

(*Caraka-saàhitā: Cikitsa 5:63-64*)

Suçruta has exercised similar restraint while giving the number of bones but simultaneously quoting the number mentioned in Caraka alluding to *Veda-vādins* (*Suçruta-saàhitā: Sārera 5:18*). According to the rule of logics: “*Apratisiddhaà paramataà anumataà bhavati*”. Since he has not contradicted this opinion, by implication, he has accepted it as an alternative.

From the above, it can safely be concluded that there were two distinct and different traditions of Ayurveda viz., Brāhma tradition and Rudra tradition. Topics like *nāḍē-parékñā*, *rasa-çāstra* including yoga and tantra formed a part of latter tradition. *Nāḍē-parékñā* is thus not exogenous. Similarly *rasa-çāstra* was not created by Buddhist saints as is commonly believed, but were collected and codified by Saivite saints of South India, saints belonging to *Nātha* Sect of northern India and Saivite saints of other parts of India. In the classics of *Brāhma samprādaya*, these topics belonging to different *samprādaya* were only briefly described but subsequently disappeared from the extant editions of the works because of the ravages of time and errors of redactors, supplementors and copyists.

Ayurvedic physicians should not put blind faith in euro-centric attitude of European Orientalists and historians of Ayurveda keeping in view the instructions provided by Suçruta as follows:

@k<zaômxlyanaen iv* aCDaZÇiní ym!,

tSmaÖ÷i t> zaô<ivj anlyai½ikTsk>.

(*Suçruta-saàhitā: Sutra: 4:7*)

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