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AN OVERVIEW: AYURVEDIC TONGUE DIAGNOSIS

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Abstract

Tongue diagnosis is a vital instrument used in Ayurvedic medicine both for assessing a person's current status of the health and providing basis for prognosis. Tongue examination is coming under Asthvidha pariksha vidhi described by Yogaratnakara. Ayurveda, the oldest known healing modality in the world, describes tongue diagnosis as a technique to determine a person's state of physical, mental and emotional health. This diagnostic technique informs the practitioner of underlying challenges and strengths in organs and body systems. Imbalance and potential disease can be detected in their early stages, giving the person an opportunity to bring balance before disease manifests. This paper is mainly aimed to scout out the importance of tongue examination in diagnosis or to help in finding out differential diagnosis of diseases and to explore the advancement of modern medical science in tongue examination to arrive at proper diagnosis.

Keywords: Asthavidha pariksha, vikruti, jihva, diagnosis.

Introduction

Ayurveda, holistic medicine has got its worldwide importance by its nature of curing the disease from its root cause. In medical science diagnosing a disease plays a prime role. Treating a disease successfully wholly depends on the art of diagnosing the disease condition. The term "Pareeksha" is the ayurvedic version of depicting "Diagnosis" in contemporary science. Asthavidha pariksha the methodology of diagnosing the diseases. This includes the pareeksha of Nadi, Mala, Mutra, Jihva, Shbda, Sparsha, drik and akriti. Among these Nadi pariksha and Jihva pariksha takes a special place having references in many ancient medicinal approaches in different demography. Jihva pariksha, diagnosing the health and disease condition of the body by the examination of the tongue of an individual. Imbalances and potential disease can be detected in their early stages, giving the person an opportunity to bring balance before disease

manifests. The references for this methodology of diagnosing is found in the ancient Indian classics and also worldwide in China, Greek and Korean medicine.

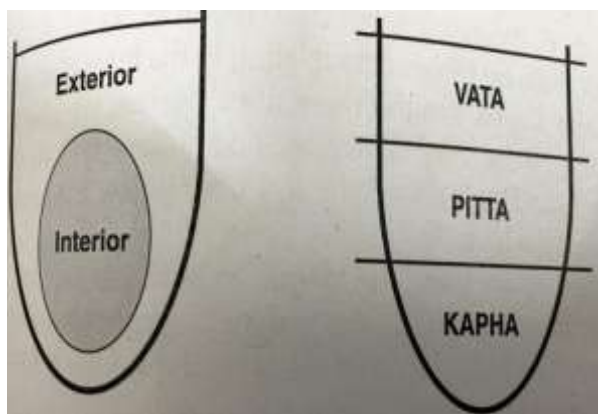
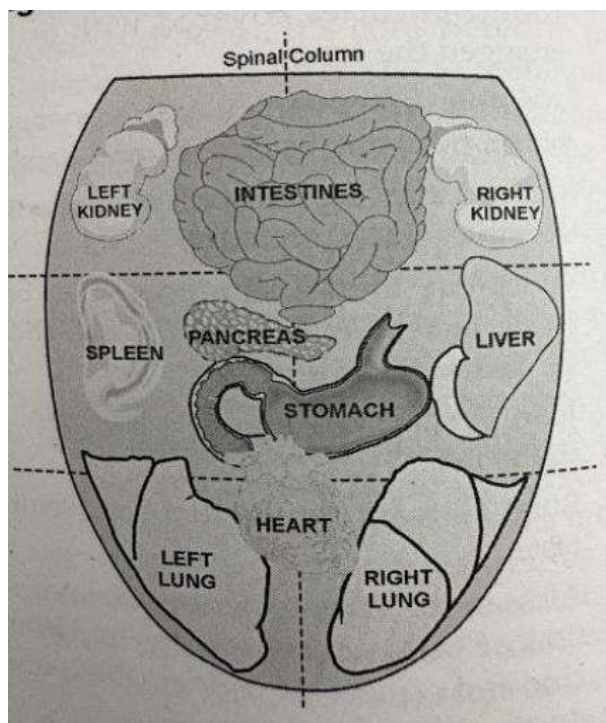
Tongue Diagnosis - A Four step Procedure

When doing a tongue diagnosis, a clear understanding of the entire person and pathology is needed to evaluate either general or specific tongue signs. Here is a simple four-step process to determine the individual's prakruti and vikruti.

- Get a general impression of the tongue by observing the tongue's vitality.
- Collect and identify the individual's signs concerning the tongue's colour, shape and coating. A topographic map of the tongue is essential for this step.
- Examine the underside of the tongue. The best way to do this is for the individual to curl the tongue upward and gently rest its tip on the front part of the palate. Observe the size and colour of the two veins on either side of the frenulum.
- Reevaluate the general impression of the individual's tongue signs. This is the step that brings together the diagnosis to reach a conclusion of the treatment protocol.

The Tongue Maps

In Ayurveda, the tongue is considered a microcosm of the entire body, reflecting both organ system and dosha balances. The tongue map divides the tongue into three main sections, each corresponding to different body regions and governed by a specific dosha.

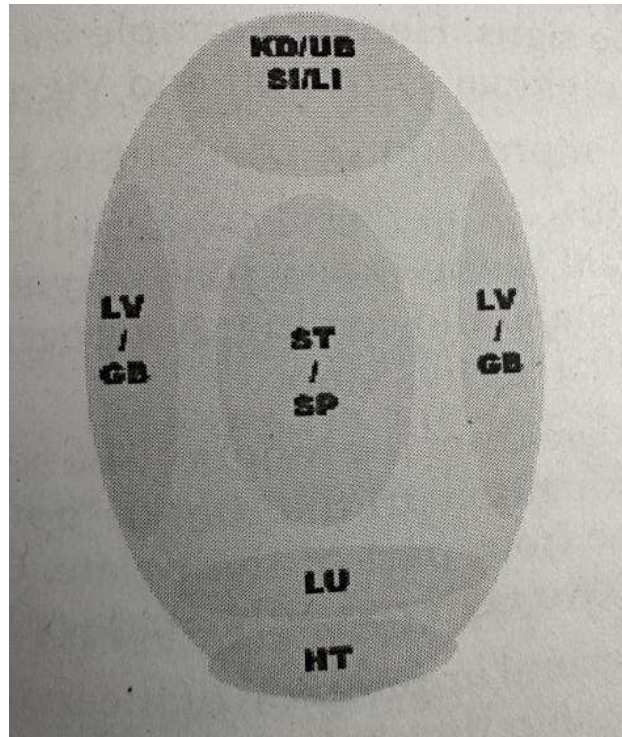


- Tongue Map (this diagram is a mirror image) B. Tongue interior and exterior map and the tongue dosha zones

The interior of the tongue is where Agni is located; it covers the three main digestive organs of stomach, small intestines and large intestines.

The exterior is where the other bodily organs are located; the heart, lungs, thyroid, liver, spleen, pancreas, gall bladder, adrenal and kidneys.

Topography of the Tongue



The tongue is divided into three areas or zones

- The first (anterior) third of the tongue reflects the dosha that correspond to kapha, which is called the upper burner in TCM. This includes the heart and lungs.
- The second (middle) third of the tongue reflects the dosha that correspond to pitta, which is called the middle burner in TCM. This includes the spleen, stomach, liver and gall bladder.
- The third (posterior) third of the tongue reflects the dosha that correspond to vata, which is called the lower burner in TCM. This includes the kidneys, bladder and large intestines.

Prakruti is seen in the tongue through the shape, tongue colour and general vitality of the tongue spirit.

The Normal Healthy Tongue

The tongue is a reflexion of the energetic harmony within the individual's constitution. It reflects the harmonious balance and interplay of the five elements.

The tongue of the healthy person would have a luster and shine with a fresh-looking pale red colour and a thin white coating (formed of the papillae on the surface of the tongue), which should be like “grass growing out of soil”, that is. Firmly rooted and not liable to be scraped off. Children’s tongues are more likely to exhibit this state of health/perfection than adults.

The four principles to check in a healthy tongue

- . The healthy tongue body colour is pale-red.
- . The healthy tongue body shape is neither too thick nor too thin.
- . The healthy tongue coating is white and thin.
- . The vein underneath the tongue are not distended

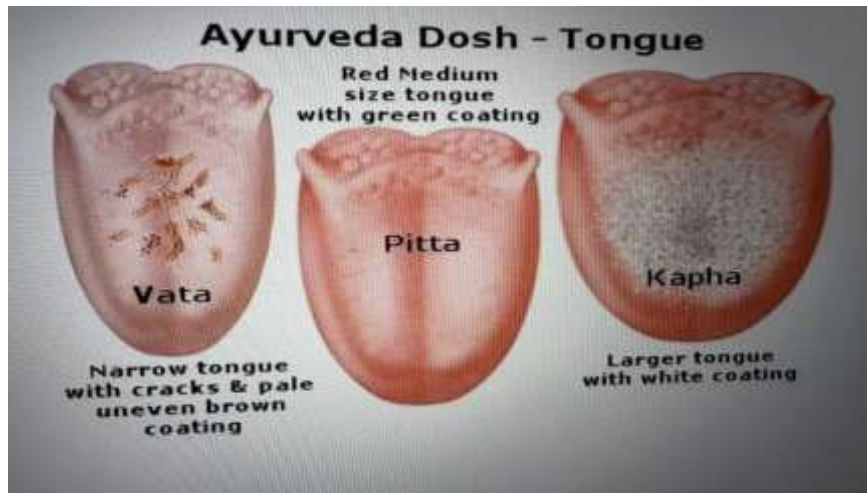
As per classics vataprakriti persons have tongue features like sheeta, khara, ruksha, suska, chala and laghu, during tongue examination they will be very anxious and they will find difficult in protruding the tongue for examination. Pitta prakriti persons will have a tongue in rakta or shyama varna and they will extend out their tongue like an arrow during examination. Kapha prakriti person's tongue will be snigdha, mrudu, sheeta, slakshna, lipta, picchila and pandu varna; during examination they will flop their tongue out of the mouth due to its larger size. These are the physiological variation among the individuals of different prakriti. By a thorough understanding of the prakriti; vikruti can be easily determined.

Vikriti determination (Pathological Tongue)

Understanding of pathology purely pays the better way for an appropriate diagnosis. The main root cause for all the ailments is the imbalances in the physiological constitution of vata, pitta and kapha. Like any other ayurvedic diagnostic methodology Jihvapareeksha also can be done with the aid of Trividhapareeksha.

Table 1: Vikriti determination (Pathological Tongue)

Dosha	Vata	Pitta	Kapha	Tridoshaja
Darshana				
Colour of the tongue	krisna(blackish)	Rakta (red)	Pandu (pale)	Abnormal pinkish
Colour of the tongue coating	Grey, Black or Brown	Orange, Red, Yellow or Green	Thick, whitish coating	Blackish
Appearance	Small, short, thin, dry, cracked, teeth marks and trembling	Long, narrow, pointed, inflamed, ulcerated, red small projection, swollen and red edges	Large, swollen, thick, soft, wet and with wet edges	Like a burnt organ, dry
Sparshana	Khara(rough)	Inflamed	Swollen	Sakantak (rough)
Prashna	Kashayaasyata (Astringent taste)	Katukashyata (Pungent and bitter)	Mukhamadhurya (sweet)	Mixed taste



Different diseases and the variation in features of the tongue that are examined on Jivha Pariksha as per Ayurveda

Colour

- Pale tongue: Indicating Pitta is low and/or blood deficiency. Low Pitta could cause of a hypothyroid condition or other metabolic deficiencies. Blood deficiency may be associated with anemia.



- Red tongue : It can be due to infection or illness or it can be due to lack of kapha in body. A strawberry-red tongue could be an early sign of Kawasaki disease, a rare, serious illness that inflames blood vessels all over the body, most often in children. It is also a symptom of scarlet fever as per modern science. If red tongue is also smooth and pain in the mouth, it might be a sign of vitamin B3 deficiency.



- Purple tongue: Blood stagnation. It is poor blood circulation. This can be due to local trauma after a long period of stress. Blood stagnation can also arrive after a period of blood deficiency in which case the tongue will be a very pale purple.



- Yellow tongue : Excess pitta, acidity and bile imbalance



Coating of the tongue

No coating indicates Kapha imbalance.

In Ayurveda, a tongue coating indicates the presence of Ama (toxic, undigested material) resulting from weak digestion (Agni).

White coating: Normal or slightly cool and wet body environment.



Light yellow to yellow coating: It indicates cold internal temperature becoming hot when common cold is turning into flu or a viral infection.



Brown coating: Internal heat that is damaging the kapha. It occurs when a high fever or metabolic functions are operating in some other site of hyperactivity.

Thick coating : accumulation of kapha, wet, damp environment creating phlegm. Dampness and phlegm indicates a fluid metabolism problem giving rise to any one of a number of moist, oozing or muggy pathologies. Thick white coating due to candida overgrowth in immunocompromised patients. If there is hard, white areas that can't be scraped away, it could be leukoplakia, which is linked to cancer.



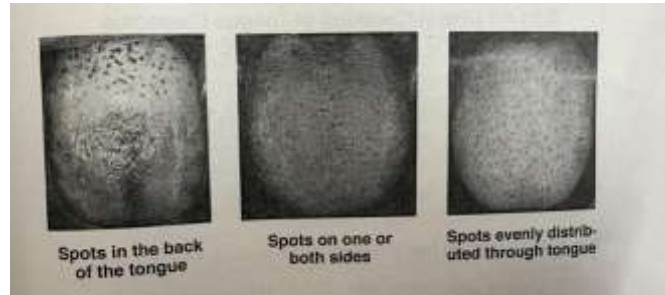
Spots on Tongue body

No spots: A healthy sign.

Spots in the back of the tongue: disturbance in the Vata region. It also suggests that there is some sort of nerve disturbance or infection going on in the large intestines.

Spots on one or both sides: Liver imbalance. It occurs when some sorts of pain in the abdominal region, most likely connected with mood swings, irritability, red eyes or migraines.

infection going on in the body, or some other cause of hyperfunction of the metabolism or other body system.



Fissured tongue

A few cracks: systemic Kapha deficiency and disturb vata. Kapha deficiency and Vata disturbance indicates that there is a dryness going on in the body and the nervous system is depleted.



Comparative Clinical Significance in Ayurveda and Modern science

Table 2: Comparative Clinical Significance in Ayurveda and Modern science

Tongue feature	Ayurveda	Modern medicine
COLOUR		
Pale	Low Prana	Anaemia, Malnutrition
Red	High Pitta	Toxemia, Infectious disorders & Fevers

Tongue feature	Ayurveda	Modern medicine
Purplish	High Pitta	Infections affecting: respiratory & circulatory system
Bluish	Agni and pitta out of balance, kapha is high	Heart problems, respiratory and circulatory disorders
TONGUE BODY		
Contracted	Pitta and Agni disturbance	Severe infections creating weakness and emaciation
Crooked	Vata high	Stroke, or similar nerve damage or nerve stimulation
Flaccid	Vata high	Low thyroid, fatigue, hypoglycemia
Smooth	Kapha is out of balance	Malnutrition, anaemia, atrophy of filiform and fungiform papillae
Swollen	Kapha is high, Pitta is disturbed	Edema, infections and congestion in the tissue
Protruding	Kapha is imbalance, Pitta is in excess	Fever, toxemia
Trembling	Vata is high	Often an indication of hyperthyroidism, poor health and neurosis
Hyperactive	Pitta is high, Vata is disturbed	Can be a sign of anemia, exhaustion or the after of a stroke or cerebro vascular accidents
TONGUE COATING		
White	Kapha is high	Early stages of febrile illness; convalescence or chronic mild diseases
Yellowish orange	Pitta is high and out of balance	Constipation, bacterial infectious diseases
Black	Vata, Pitta and Kapha disturbed and out of balance	Fungal infections, severe diseases at this stage

Tongue feature	Ayurveda	Modern medicine
CHARACTER		
Thin	Pitta is slightly high, kapha is affected	Mild pathogenic factors
Thick	Pitta is high, kapha is high	Pathogenic factors, affecting respiratory and digestive systems
Moist	Kapha is slightly high	Normal to excess salivary secretion
Dry	Pitta and Agni are high	Dehydration, fevers, decreased salivary secretion
Greasy/Slippery	Kapha is high	Sluggish digestion; unhealthy oral cleaning habits

Conclusion

The tongue is the mirror of the digestive system. It reflects the condition taking place inside the body. Jivha Pareeksha is one among the Ashta Sthana Pareeksha that helps in understanding the healthy state of a healthy individual, diagnosis, and prognosis of a disease. Based on the components like Varna, Pramana, Thala, Upalepa, and Chalana of the tongue different conditions can be assessed. The features of a healthy state of a person are known through the examination of the tongue. The abnormal characteristics of the tongue direct the diseased conditions. Fatal signs and symptoms told in Ayurveda help to know the fatality of the disease. Thus, Jihwa (tongue) must be examined very carefully, and this is an important tool for the diagnosis and prognosis of a disease.

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