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Review Article

JIWHA PARIKSHA- A MIRROR OF HUMAN HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

The tongue is the primary organ of taste and considered as the mirror that reflects the conditions of the body's internal organs, particularly the organs of digestion and metabolism. The tongue also reflects the overall digestive, nutritive and metabolic conditions of the organism. An ideally healthy tongue will look clean and have a pink colour with no white coating.

In *Ayurveda*, *Acharya Yogaratnakara* has mentioned tongue examination as *Jiwha Pariksha* under *Ashtasthana pariksha*. *Jiwha* (Tongue) tells about the *Dosha*, *Agni* and *Kostha*. The tongue is the window to our digestive system. There is a large amount of information that can be learned from this observation, including the health of various bodily systems, toxins within the system, emotional states, and much more.

So, the inspection of the tongue becomes an important starting point in the clinical examination and a careful observation of the state of tongue, its colour, and shape often gives a physician an insight into the current health condition of the patient.

INTRODUCTION

Proper examination of the disease is very important in clinical practice. Accurate diagnosis forms the basis for the treatment. As there were no technologies and tools were available in ancient time so *Acharyas* developed some techniques for examination of patient and the diseases such as *Dashavidha pariksha*^[1], *Ashtasthana pariksha*^[2], *Shadvidha pariksha*^[3], *Panchvidha pariksha*^[4] *Trividha pariksha*^[5] etc.

Jiwha pariksha has been described by *Acharya Yogratnakar* under *Asthavidha Pariksha*. As tongue is the only visible part of the digestive tract so tongue examination is easy, convenient and non-invasive method of diagnosis. An ideally healthy tongue will look clean and have a pink colour with no white coating. However, the majority of people have a slight coating on the back of the tongue, which is a sign of toxins (*Ama*) in the colon. If this is the case, you are usually generally healthy, as this is just *Ama* that has built up in the stomach or small intestines and moved into the colon. It comes from undigested, unabsorbed or unassimilated food. However, if the entire tongue is coated, it is a sign of systemic *ama* throughout the gastrointestinal tract.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Different *Ayurvedic* classical books, research papers and journals were referred to fulfil this part. It comprises subsections dealing with *Jiwha pariksha* and its importance.

General Examination of Tongue

The tongue should be examined for its shape, colour, moisture, movement and coating over it. *Jiwha pariksha* reveals our main constitution (*Prakriti*)^[6], imbalance of *Dosha*, state of *Agni*, and *Kostha*. Tongue indicates overall health of a person. To examine the tongue, patient is asked to protrude the tongue. The tongue is large in acromegaly, cretinism, myxoedema, lymphangioma and amyloidosis.

In *Vata* predominance, tongue is dry, rough and cracked. In *Pitta* predominance, tongue is reddish, blackish. In *Kapha* predominance, tongue is whitish and coated. In vitiation of all the three *Dosha*, tongue is inflamed at periphery, rough and blackish.^[7]

Vrinda Kurande et al. conducted a study to assess the inter reliability of Ayurvedic pulse (*Nadi*), tongue (*Jiwha*), and body constitution

(*Prakriti*). In which they assessed the degree of tongue coating. They obtained poor to moderate levels of inter rater reliability for pulse and tongue assessment. They concluded that in *Ayurveda*, the low level of reliability could be due to lack of standardized tongue examination procedure. They suggested that standardization of diagnostic methods may improve the level of reliability^[8].

Sharma Rohit et al in his study stated that different areas of the tongue correspond to different organs of the body. The front of the tongue corresponds to the lungs, heart, chest and neck. The centre of the tongue equates to the spleen, stomach, pancreas and liver. The back of the tongue corresponds to the intestines, colon and kidneys. Hence by correlating the location of the blemishes on the tongue, one can determine affected organ of the body^[9].

The deviated tongue is seen in hemiplegia of the affected side. Slight deviation is due to asymmetry of the jaw. Tremors of the tongue, either at rest or when protruded, is common in Parkinson's disease^[10] or may be due to nervousness and thyrotoxicosis. The fasciculation or wasting may be seen in lesions of hypoglossal nerve.

Colour: The normal colour of the tongue is greyish red.

- Pale/ whitish tongue –Severe Anemia.
- Bluish colouration - Alcoholic intoxication and cyanosis.
- Blackish red tongue - fatal fever (*Sannipataja jwara*), polycythaemia and riboflavin deficiency.
- Yellowish tongue - jaundice and acute hepatic necrosis.
- Blackish – penicillin injection and tobacco chewing
- Brownish- Uraemia and liver necrosis.

Discolouration is most often due to ingestion of some coloured foods.^[11]

Furring: Furring of the tongue is not a sign of disease. It is common in heavy smokers. In scarlet fever the tongue at first shows bright red papillae standing out of a white thick fur. Later the white coat disappears, leaving enlarged papillae on a bright red surface- 'the strawberry tongue'. Hairy leukoplakia may be a feature in patients with HIV infection, but also occur in immune depression from other causes^[12]. A fissured tongue and atrophic areas may respond to dietary changes, gentle brushing of the tongue and hydrogen peroxide mouthwash.

Tongue Papillae: Generalised atrophy of the papillae produces a smooth or bald tongue, a characterised of vitamin B₁₂ deficiency, but also found in iron deficiency anemia, coeliac disease and other gastrointestinal disorders and deficiency states, especially pellagra (niacin deficiency).^[13]

Moistness: A healthy tongue is moist and moisture can be altered in following conditions.^[14]

- Dehydration- *Rasakshayaja Trishna*
- Hemorrhage- *Kshataja Trishna*
- Excessive vomiting: *Vamana Atiyog*
- Anxiety, grief and anger- *Bhaya, Shoka* and *Krodha*
- Chronic illness

The Sides and Under surface of the Tongue:

Sides and under surface of the tongue are examined by asking the patient to retract and lift the tongue with mouth wide open. The two types of cyst may be found in the floor of the mouth: ranula and sublingual dermoid cyst.

As earlier said, that state of *Agni* can also be accessed by tongue. According to *Ayurveda*, all the digestive processes occur due to *Agni*^[15]. So examination of tongue can indicates the entire condition of entire digestive system. Tongue can be coated when there is any digestion related problem. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned many diseases related to tongue^[16]. So examination of tongue becomes very important.

CONCLUSION

As there is no extensive description about the tongue diagnosis in *Ayurveda* but variation in tongue's size, shape and colour has been mentioned under many disease as a sign or symptom. So it becomes important to examine the tongue for diagnosis of many diseases. *Acharya Yogratnakar* has made an approach regarding examination of tongue. Many of the conditions which affect colour and appearance of the tongue are related to GIT. So, tongue examination reveals the status of nutrition and digestion of the patients. Efforts should be done to compile all the diseases which can cause any kind of change in tongue so that diagnosis can be confirmed with the examination of disease.

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