

Jivha Pariksha: An Ayurvedic Diagnostic Tool for Health Assessment

Dr. Shilpa Yerme Patil¹, Dr. Alka Bhandare²

¹Professor Kriyasharir, S.G.R. Ayurved College, Solapur, Maharashtra

²Professor, Rachana sharir, Dhantwantari Ayurved College, Udgir Maharashtra

Abstract

Jivha Pariksha (tongue diagnosis) is an essential tool in Ayurveda for understanding the health status of an individual. The tongue reflects systemic imbalances, digestive health, and dosha disturbances. This paper explores the historical significance, methodology, clinical applications, and anatomical-physiological correlations of Jivha Pariksha, while comparing it with traditional and modern diagnostic practices. Additionally, this study highlights the relevance of tongue diagnosis in modern integrative medicine and provides a comparative analysis with traditional systems of medicine.

Keywords: Jivha Pariksha, Tongue Diagnosis, Ayurveda, Dosha Imbalance, Health Assessment, Ama, Digestive Disorders, Agni, TCM

1. Introduction

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, emphasizes disease diagnosis through non-invasive methods. Jivha Pariksha is one such diagnostic approach where the tongue serves as a mirror of internal health. Ayurvedic texts, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, describe tongue examination as a crucial method to determine dosha imbalances, the presence of Ama (toxins), and digestive health. The relevance of tongue examination is not limited to Ayurveda but extends to other traditional medicine systems, including Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Modern medicine is increasingly recognizing the importance of visual diagnostics as complementary methods for patient assessment.

2. Historical Background

The concept of Jivha Pariksha is deeply rooted in classical Ayurvedic literature. Sushruta Samhita mentions the tongue as an indicator of diseases related to digestion and metabolism. Sharangadhara Samhita elaborates on various tongue coatings and their correlation with systemic diseases. The tongue's texture, color, shape, and moisture content have historically been used to assess the internal environment of the body.

Jivha Pariksha was traditionally practiced by Ayurvedic physicians (Vaidyas) who observed the tongue as part of Ashta Sthana Pariksha (eightfold examination). Over time, tongue diagnosis evolved, incorporating detailed observations to differentiate between doshic imbalances and systemic disorders.

Shloka Reference:

"यथा स्पृष्टासु मधुरम् पित्तमाम्लमन्यते |
जिह्वाया वर्णमायत्या कपहानिद्विमुदीरयते ||"

(Ashtanga Hridaya, Sutra Sthana 2/20)

The tongue can reflect internal health, revealing imbalances of Pitta, Kapha, and Vata, thus aiding in diagnosis.

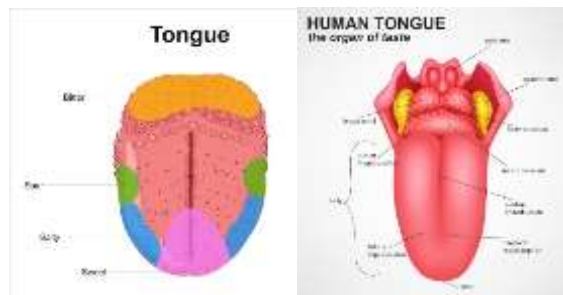
3. Anatomy and Physiology of the Tongue in Ayurveda and Modern Science

Modern Anatomy and Physiology:

The tongue is a muscular organ covered by mucous membrane, richly supplied with blood vessels and nerves. It has intrinsic and extrinsic muscles, divided into:

- **Anterior two-thirds:** Involved in taste and speech.
- **Posterior one-third:** Related to swallowing and immune function (lingual tonsils).

It contains taste buds for sweet, salty, sour, and bitter sensations, and is innervated by cranial nerves (facial, glossopharyngeal, and hypoglossal nerves).



Kriyasharir of the Tongue (Functional Anatomy in Ayurveda)

In Ayurveda, the tongue (Jivha) is considered a vital organ that plays important roles in digestion, taste perception, speech, and disease diagnosis. Below is a detailed explanation of the tongue's kriyasharir, correlating Ayurveda with modern anatomy and physiology:

1. Origin and Location of the Tongue

- **Ayurvedic Perspective:** The tongue originates from Mamsa Dhatu (muscle tissue) and is rich in Kapha due to its moist and unctuous nature.
- **Modern Embryology:** The anterior 2/3 of the tongue develops from the first pharyngeal arch, and the posterior 1/3 develops from the third and fourth arches.
- **Location:** The tongue is situated in the oral cavity and serves as a muscular organ facilitating multiple vital functions.

2. Doshic Association of the Tongue

- **Kapha Dosh:** The tongue is the principal seat of Kapha, especially Bodhaka Kapha, which aids in taste perception and the initial stages of digestion by moistening the food.
- **Qualities:** The tongue is snigdha (unctuous) and shita (cool) due to the presence of Kapha.

3. Main Functions of the Tongue (According to Ayurveda)

Function	Explanation
Rasajnana (Taste perception)	The tongue is the sense organ for taste. It perceives all six tastes (Rasas).
Digestion (Initial stage)	Bodhaka Kapha on the tongue moistens food and initiates the digestive process.
Speech (Vachana Karma)	The tongue is essential for articulation and speech formation.
Swallowing (Ahara Grahana)	The tongue shapes food into a bolus and helps in swallowing.
Disease diagnosis	Jivha Pariksha (tongue examination) is crucial for identifying internal imbalances.

4. Role in Taste Perception (Rasajnana)

According to Ayurveda, taste perception involves Indriya (sense organ), Atma (soul), Mana (mind), and Artha (object).

- The tongue recognizes the six Rasas (tastes):
 - Madhura (Sweet)** – Tip of the tongue
 - Amla (Sour)** – Sides
 - Lavana (Salty)** – Lateral anterior region
 - Katu (Pungent)** – Posterior
 - Tikta (Bitter)** – Posterior middle
 - Kashaya (Astringent)** – Central part

5. Relationship with Dhatus (Tissues)

Dhatu (Tissue)	Relation with Tongue
Rasa Dhatu	Involved in taste perception (Rasajnana)
Mamsa Dhatu	Structural basis of the tongue
Rakta Dhatu	Responsible for the tongue's color and vitality

6. Modern Correlation

- Muscles:**

Intrinsic and extrinsic muscles such as genioglossus, styloglossus, etc., control the movement of the tongue.
- Nerve Supply:**
 - Taste:
 - Anterior 2/3** – Chorda tympani branch of facial nerve (CN VII)
 - Posterior 1/3** – Glossopharyngeal nerve (CN IX)
 - Motor:
 - Hypoglossal nerve (CN XII)
- Taste Buds:** Filiform, fungiform, circumvallate, and foliate papillae.

7. Dosha Imbalance and Tongue Symptoms

Dosha	Tongue Characteristics
Vata	Dry, cracked, rough surface
Pitta	Red, inflamed, yellow coating
Kapha	Swollen, thick white coating, sluggish movement

8. Important Ayurvedic References

"Bodhakah kapho jihvāyām sravan rasam vijānati"

– *Ashtanga Hridaya, Sutra Sthana 12/12 (Bodhaka Kapha in the tongue facilitates taste perception.)*

"Yathā mukhe rasam jñātum sravati bodhakah" – *Sharangadhara Samhita (The secretion of Bodhaka Kapha enables taste identification.)*

The tongue is a powerful diagnostic and functional tool in Ayurveda. Beyond taste, it contributes to digestion, speech, and reflects internal imbalances. Its structure is linked to Mamsa and Kapha, and its functional health is an indicator of Agni (digestive fire), dosha balance, and dhatu status. Ayurvedic kriyasharir highlights the tongue's holistic role in health, making it a key component of clinical examination and treatment planning.

4. Methodology of Jivha Pariksha

Tongue examination in Ayurveda follows a systematic approach:

Key Diagnostic Parameters

Parameter	Observation	Possible Interpretation
Color	Pale	Vata imbalance, anemia
	Red	Pitta aggravation, heat disorders
	Yellowish	Liver issues, excess bile
	Blue/Purple	Poor circulation, blood stagnation
Coating	Thick white	Ama accumulation, Kapha imbalance
	Yellow	Pitta imbalance, digestive fire disturbance
Moisture	Dry tongue	Vata imbalance, dehydration
	Excessively moist	Kapha dominance, sluggish digestion
Shape & Texture	Cracks on tongue	Chronic digestive issues, dehydration
	Swollen with teeth marks	Weak digestion, malabsorption
Movement	Trembling tongue	Vata aggravation, anxiety, neurological issues

Timing: Morning examination before food or water intake is preferred for accuracy.

Shloka Reference:

"स्निग्धममयं यानेति यथान्यमामयनायते |
जिह्वाया रूपम् यान्ति व्याधिकारणेत् ||"

(*Sushruta Samhita, Nidana Sthana 7/5*)

The tongue's appearance indicates underlying health conditions, helping in the differentiation of diseases.

5. Correlation of Agni with Tongue Appearance

Agni (digestive fire) is the cornerstone of health in Ayurveda. It determines digestion, absorption, and transformation. Jivha Pariksha helps assess the status of Agni:

1. Samagni (Balanced Digestion)

- Tongue: Normal pink with thin white coating
- Indicates healthy digestion and metabolism

2. Vishamagni (Irregular Digestion - Vata Dominance)

- Tongue: Dry, cracked
- Indicates irregular appetite, bloating, gas

3. Tikshnagni (Hyperactive Digestion - Pitta Dominance)

- Tongue: Red with yellow coating
- Indicates excessive hunger, acidity

4. Mandagni (Weak Digestion - Kapha Dominance)

- Tongue: Thick white coating, swollen
- Indicates slow digestion, heaviness, Ama

Shloka Reference:

"समग्निर्मदविषमतिक्ष्णान्निश्च चतुर्विधाः ।

रोगाणामुदयस्थानमग्निरेव हि देहिनाम् ॥"

(Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa Sthana 15/3)

6. Clinical Significance

Jivha Pariksha aids in early diagnosis and preventive care:

- **Digestive Disorders:** Coated tongue indicates Ama; dry tongue indicates Vata issues.
- **Liver & Gallbladder Disorders:** Yellow tongue suggests Pitta aggravation.
- **Circulatory Issues:** Purple/blue tongue suggests blood stagnation.
- **Metabolic Disorders:** Swollen tongue with indentations indicates poor digestion.
- **Mental Health:** Trembling tongue may signal anxiety or nervous system disorders.

7. Future Research and Applications

- Developing standardized criteria for Jivha Pariksha
- AI-based tongue imaging tools for diagnostic assistance
- Cross-cultural research with TCM tongue diagnosis
- Integrating tongue microbiome with gut health studies

8. Conclusion

Jivha Pariksha is a powerful, non-invasive tool grounded in Ayurvedic diagnostics. It enables early detection of internal imbalances and supports preventive and personalized care. With modern integration and technological advancements, tongue diagnosis holds potential for broader clinical applications.

References

1. Charaka Samhita - Sutra & Chikitsa Sthana
2. Sushruta Samhita - Nidana Sthana
3. Sharangadhara Samhita

4. Ashtanga Hridaya - Sutra Sthana
5. Kunte, A.M., & Navre, K. (2022). "Clinical Applications of Ayurvedic Tongue Diagnosis: A Review." *Journal of Ayurveda & Integrative Medicine*, 13(1), 45-56.
6. WHO. (2023). "Traditional Medicine and Its Role in Global Healthcare." *World Health Organization Reports*, 45(2), 78-91.