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Review Article

THE CONCEPT OF NIDAN IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the science of life which provides healthy long life as it deals with prevention and promotion of health as well as the treatment of diseases. All the ancient Ayurvedic classics discussed the *Tridosha*-theory as a base. The equilibrium of tridosha causes health where as disequilibrium of the same leads to different types of diseases depending upon specific pathogenesis. Effect is observed according to the cause as per the well known theory of *Karya-karan-vad* of Ayurveda. Illness is because of different causes and its effect is seen in the form of *linga* (symptoms of the disease) for which *aushadh* is essential to treat that's why ancient seers and sages of Ayurveda propounded the "Trisutra-Ayurveda" namely *Hetu*, *Linga* and *Aushadha*. *Hetu* is the synonym of *nidan* in the context of diagnosis of the diseases. It is the first and foremost factor which initiates the pathology and crucial in diagnosis as well as treatment also. Keeping this significance in the mind Acharya Charak has stated that a physician should first diagnose the disease correctly and Chakrapanidatta, the commentator of Charak-Samhita says that successful treatment depends upon the proper knowledge of *hetu* and *linga* of the disease. The term ' *nidan* ' in the Ayurveda has been used in two sense mainly i.e. *vyadhijanaka nidan* and *vyadhibodhak nidan*. Knowledge of *nidan* in both the sense is essential for a good physician to get success. Diagnosis is never complete without the elucidation of all the factors related with the disease.

Keywords: *Ayurveda, Nidan-Panchaka, Nidan, Karan, Hetu, Chikitsa.*

INTRODUCTION

All the *Ayurvedic* classics have discussed about *Nidan* very vividly. It is because of significance of the concept of *nidan*. *Nidan* means aetiological factors of disease. It is of two types according to *Cakrapanidatta* i.e. *vyadhi-janaka nidan* and *vyadhi-bhodhaka nidan*. *Vyadhi-janaka nidan* means causes of disease or diseases (etiological factors). *Vyadhi-bhodhaka nidan* means which is the mean of diagnosis which includes *nidan*, *purvarupa*, *rupa*, *upasaya* and *samprapti* (*nidan - panchaka*)¹. Again *Acharya Cakrapanidatta* has again discussed the *nidan* of two types for all the diseases i.e. *Sadharana* and *Asadharana karan* in his commentary of *Charak-Samhita*². *Nidan*, *dosha* and *dushya* play a significant role in the manifestation of each and every disease. In this context, *nidan* means external causative factors which includes faulty diet, life style and accidental causes, *dosha* are *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* considered as the *samavayi karan* of endogenous diseases and *dushya* means *Rasa* etc. *dhatu*s and *malas* which are vitiated by *doshas*. Diagnosis is never complete without the elucidation of all the factors related with

the disease. This article is mainly concerned with *vyadhijanaka-nidan*.

NIRUKTI AND DEFINITION OF NIDAN

Nidan word has been defined by Amar Singh in *Amarakosha*³ as -

निदानं त्वादिकारणम् । निदानमिति नितरां दीयतेऽसाधारणतया जन्यतेऽनेन ।

Means the entity by which something is produced specifically is known as *nidan*. He says that *nidan* can be defined as *adikarana* which means " *Mukhya karan* " i.e. main cause. It can be used in medical science in the sense of initiating causes of disease or diseases.

Acharya Charaka says that "तत्र निदानं कारणमित्युक्तमग्रे" means *nidan* word has been used in the sense of causative factors of the disease⁴. *Acharya Vijayarakshita* has mentioned in *Madhukosha Tika* that the factor which causes disease are known as *nidan*. *Nidan* is the process by which disease is diagnosed. Again *Acharya Vijayarakshita* has defined that which gives complete knowledge about *Vyadhi*, is called *nidan*⁵. The word *nidan* is used in two different contexts i.e. etiological factors and diagnosis of diseases of the diseased

one. Further *Acharya Vriddha Vagbhata* has mentioned in *Ashtanga-Samgraha* that *nidan* means one which aggravates *vata* *doshas*⁶. It is due to intake of unwholesome diet and improper activities. Regarding the definition of *nidan*, *Acharya Gananatha Sen* in his book *Siddhanta-nidan* put forward his views that external etiological factors are called *nidan*. These factors causes either disturbance in equilibrium of *dhatu*s or directly produce various disorders. In this way *nidan* is of two types. The first one is the cause of endogenous diseases and second is the cause of exogenous diseases. Further explained that the term 'Nimitta' is used to differentiate from *Samavayi* and *Asamavayi Karana* of the diseases⁷.

SYNONYMS OF NIDAN

Acharya Charaka has described *hetu*, *nimitta*, *Ayatana*, *karta*, *karana*, *pratyaya* and *samutthana* as synonyms of *nidan* in the *Nidanstan*⁸. *Acharya Vriddha Vagbhata* has mentioned two more synonyms of the term *nidan* i.e. *mulam* and *yoni*⁹. Brief information of the synonyms is being given here-

Hetu- Hetu means the cause.

Nimitta- Apart from the cause, *Nimitta* gives the meaning of *Sakuna* also. (*Vidyotini* Hindi commentary of *Charak-Samhita*)

Ayatana- The *Ayatana* word stands for *karana*. It means the site or region also which gives shelter. The *Ayatana* word is used in *sutrasthana* in the context of the cause of diseases. Again in 29th chapter of *Sutrasthana* of *Charaka Samhita*, the term *Ayatana* is used in the context of ten *pranayatana*.

Karta- Means one who is doer.

Karana- Means the primary cause.

Pratyaya- *Pratyaya* is used in the sense of faith, suffix also. In the context of *nidan*, it is the cause of disease.

Samutthana- Means by which something gets origin, it is used in the sense of 'Unnati' also which means progress or development.

Nidan – According to *Amarakosha*, it is the initial cause of disease gives the meaning as *nishchaya*. The *nidan* is the cause and it is first among *nidan-panchaka*.

CLASSIFICATION OF NIDAN

According to *Charaka Samhita*, there are three types of causes of diseases in general i.e. excessive utilisation, non-utilisation and wrong utilisation of objects, acts and time¹⁰. These are *Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga*, *Prajnaparadha* and *Kala*. *Madhavakara* has also discussed the similar causes. The objects of senses are five and further subdivided each into three, so totally 15 varieties of unwholesome conjunction of sense organ is observed and it is the root cause for the manifestation of diseases.

Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga means unwholesome contact of *Chakshurindriya*, *Shravanendriya*, *Ghranendriya*, *Rasanendriya*, and *Sparshanendriya* with their objects.

Prajnaparadha means wrong utilisation of speech, body and mind. Some says even sinful acts also responsible for intellectual blesphemy.

Kala is known as transforming or consequence. *Kala* is the unit of time comprises of *hemanta ritu*, *grishma ritu* and *varsha ritu* characterised by cold, hot and rain respectively. Unhealthy season is considered one of the causes of the diseases.

Cakrapanidatta has discussed *nidan* of two types for all the diseases in the living beings- *Sadharana* and *Asadharana karana*. Among these *Asadharana karana* include *Ahara* etc. which is responsible for vitiation of *vata* *doshas* in individual and *sadharana karana* means which are shared commonly by all the persons of a locality viz. *Vata*, *Jala*, *Desha* and *Kala* described in *Janpadoddhvansa-Viman* chapter of *Charak-Samhita*.

As per *Madhukosh-tika of Madhav-Nidan*, *nidan* is classified in to four types- *Sannikrishta hetu*, *Viprakrishta hetu*, *Vyabhichari hetu* and *Pradhanika hetu*¹¹.

SANNIKRISHTA HETU-

The factors which causes the *prakopa* of the *doshas* and do not expect the *sanchaya* etc. stages. For examples-Diurnal variation of *doshas* takes place routinely i.e. during night, day and during digestion, for this *sanchaya* of *doshas* is not essential, it manifests naturally. It is the proximal/ immediate cause of the disease. For example; intake of *ruksha* etc. Diet in *Jwara roga* is *sannikrishta karan* where as *Rudra-kopa* can be taken as *viprakrishta karan*.

VIPRAKRISTA HETU

It is the distant cause for the production of disease. For examples- *Sanchaya* of *kapha doshas* in *Hemanta ritu* produces disease in *Vasanta ritu* (spring season). It is also accepted that *Javara* manifest due to warth of God *Rudra* is also the *viprakrishta karana*.

VYABHICHARI HETU-

The cause which is weak and unable to produce the diseases, but act as a carrier. When favourable situation arises for the manifestation of diseases, due to certain factors, even unwholesome food does not produce diseases immediately.

PRADHANIKA HETU-

It is the powerful cause which produce diseases instantaneously like poison, Accumulation of *doshas* is not necessary, sudden manifestation of the symptoms are seen.

Again as per *Madhukosh-tika of Madhav-Nidan*, *nidan* has been classified in to three types - *Dosha hetu*, *Vyadhi hetu* and *Ubhaya hetu*.

DOSHA HETU

Normal accumulation, aggravation and pacification of *doshas* take place in respective seasons due to *madhura* etc. *rasas* is called *dosha hetu*. Means factors responsible for the aggravation of *doshas* comes under the heading 'dosha-hetu' in the context of *nidan* of diseases.

VYADHI HETU

Vyadhi hetu are those which are responsible for the development of specific disease by specific etiology. For example: regular consumption of 'mrit' (clay) manifest *mritbhakshanajanya pandu roga*.

UBHAYA HETU-

Specific factors which aggravate *vata* and *rakta* and simultaneously manifest *vatarakta-vyadhi*. Here causative factors aggravate *dosha* & simultaneously manifest diseases.

Again as per *Madhukosh-tika of Madhav-Nidan*, *nidan* has been classified into two types - *Utpadaka hetu* and *Vyanjaka hetu*.

UTPADAKA HETU-

Utpadaka-hetu are those which favour accumulation of respective *dosha* in respective season due to seasonal effect.

For example: in *hemant ritu* due to *madhura rasa*, accumulation of *kapha* is observed.

VYANJAKA HETU-

Vyanjaka hetu are those which stimulate the development of diseases. For examples: accumulated *kapha* in *hemant ritu* produces disorders of *kapha* in *vasanta ritu* due to effect of sun. Here effect of sun is the *Vyanjaka hetu*.

Again as per *Madhukosh- tika of Madhav-Nidan*, *nidan* has been classified into two types -*Bahya hetu* and *Abhyantara hetu*.

BAHYA HETU

Various unwholesome diets, activities, ill effects of season and such other external factors producing disease, are called *bahya hetu*.

ABHYANTAR HETU-

Abhyantara hetu means internal factors of the disease such as the *dosha* and *dushya* involved.

Again as per *Madhukosh- tika of Madhav-Nidan*, *nidan* has been classified

In to two types - *Prakrita hetu* and *Vaikrita hetu*.

PRAKRITA HETU -

Prakrita hetu are those which causes aggravation of *dosha/doshas* naturally. For example: *Kapha prakopa* in *vasanta ritu*, *Pitta prakopa* in *Sarad ritu*, *Vata prakopa* in *varsha ritu* is due to the seasonal effect.

VAIKRITA HETU-

Vaikrita hetu are those which cause *dosha prakopa* or *vyadhi* irrespective of seasonal effects. For example: in *vasanta ritu* - *pitta-vayu prakopa*, in *varsha ritu* - *kapha-pitta prakopa*, in *Sarad ritu* - *kapha-vata prakopa*.

Again as per *Madhukosh- tika of Madhav-Nidan*, *nidan* has been classified into two

types - *Anubandhya hetu* and *Anubandha hetu*.

ANUBANDHYA HETU - It is the prime cause.

ANUBANDHA HETU - It is the secondary cause.

Acharya Gananatha Sen has classified *nidan* into two types i.e. *Samanya-*

nidan and *Vishista- nidan*.

SAMANYA- NIDAN -

Unwholesome *Ahar* and *vihar* are general etiological factors.

VISHISHTA- NIDAN -

Shastra, *agni*, *krimi* and *sarpa* etc. are called specific etiological factors. Further he has explained that the specific etiological factors are *nimitta* for *Agantuja roga* which directly produce the disease. Among specific etiological factors *visha*, *Shastra*, *agni*, *sthula krimi*, *sarpa* and *dansa* are gross specific etiological factors. Microorganism, *sukshma krimi* etc. are the minute specific etiological factors.

SIGNIFICANCE OF NIDAN

Hetu is the prime factors for the causation of disease. That's why both *Acharyas Charak* and *Sushrut* have advised to avoid the etiological factors¹² and it is the primary step in the management of any disease. *Hetu* gives an idea to diagnose the disease and as well as some time clue to predict the forthcoming disease. *Nidan* or *hetu* are of two types i.e. *samanya* and *vishishta*. *Samanya nidan* helps to know the effect on the *doshas* where as *vishishta nidan* help to predict specific disease such as; *Mridbhakshanajanya Pandu-roga*,

Makshika-bhakshanajanya-Chhardi etc. *Hetu* or *nidan* is useful to know the prognosis as it is well versed in the text that intake or indulgence in all the etiological factors causes severe disease resulting in incurability¹³ where as intake of less *hetu* causes mild disease which is easy to cure¹⁴. It is equally important in treatment also as physician advice the *chikitsa* considering the cause such as diseases caused by extreme effect of cold are treated by hot substances and vice versa. Diseases which are caused by over indulgence in fatty substances are treated by non-unctuous substances and many other examples of *karananurup-chikitsa* can be quoted in this context. Therefore, *nidan* is useful in diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment and even in protection of health.

DISCUSSION

Different *Acharyas* have discussed *nidan* in their own way which enriches the concept of *nidan*. Different classifications of *nidan* are available and each of them is useful in clinical practice. Different types can be justified by the quotation of *Acharya Charaka*¹⁵-

“भेत्ता हि भेदमन्यथा भिनत्ति।”

Each and every classification gives an important idea about the nature of the etiological factor such as *Pradhanik hetu* is quite different from *vyabhichari hetu*, similarly *sannikrishta* and *viprakrishta hetu*, *utpadak* and *vyanjak hetu*, *prakriti* and *vaikrit hetu* are either opposite in nature or play different type of role in the manifestation of disease. For instance if we check the disease process at the level of *utpadak hetu*, it is easy to cure, but when *vyanjak hetu* takes place definitely more aggravation is there. Treatment of *asatmyendriyarth samyog* is not similar to *prajnaparadh* and vice versa. That's why different classifications give different messages which are altogether useful in clinical practices. *Nidan* word has been used in *Ayurveda* in both the sense i.e. *vyadhijanak* and *vyadhibodhak* but this article is mainly focused on *vyadhijanak nidan*.

CONCLUSION

Nidan is defined as the external cause/causes of the disease. Elucidation of *nidan* is necessary for the proper identification of *Dosha*, the *Roga*, *Rogavasta*, *Roga Bala*, and *Sadhyata- Asadhyata* of disease. The knowledge of *nidan* is useful for diagnosis, prognosis and treatment. Even one can protect his health if he knows about the *nidan* of various diseases. The first line of treatment is *nidan - parivarjana* (to avoid causative factors) of diseases. *Acharya Charaka* says that a physician should first of all diagnose the disease and then he should select proper medicine. Thereafter, he should administer the therapy applying the knowledge of the science of medicine. A physician who initiates treatment without proper diagnosis of the disease can accomplish the desired object only by chance; the fact that he is well acquainted with the knowledge of application of medicine does not necessarily guarantee his success. That's why *Acharya Charak* has stated¹⁶ -

रोगमादौ परीक्षेत ततोऽनन्तरमौषधम् । ततः कर्म भिषक् पश्चाज्ज्ञानपूर्व समाचरेत्

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