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Tracing the pathways: Identifying *Nadi* linking foot to eye and their role in *Padabhyanga*

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ABSTRACT

Throughout Ayurveda texts, the practices of *Padabhyanga*, *Padatrdharana*, *Prakshalana*, and *Padapooja* have been emphasized as beneficial for ocular health, referred to as *Dhrishti Prasadaka* or *Chakshusya*. *Acharya Vagbhata's* elaboration on two *Nadi* originating from the midpoint of the feet, ascending to the *Shirah Pradesh* and extending to the *Netra*, underscores a profound correlation between the *Chakshu Indriya* and the *Pada*. This research article delves into the intricate relationship between the foot and the eye as elucidated in ancient *Ayurveda* texts. After meticulous examination of various sources, it becomes evident that a network of interconnected *Nadi* links the foot to the eye. Texts such as *Vaishshtha Samhita*, *Varah Samhita*, *Shandilya Samhita*, and *Darshan Samhita* mention *Yashshvini-Pusa Nadi* connected by *Varana Nadi* to the right eye, and *Hastjihva-Gandhari Nadi* connected via *Vishwodhara Nadi* to the left. Similarly, insights from *Yoga Upanishads* and *Varmam Shastra* further corroborate the association of specific *Nadi* with ocular function. Central to this understanding is the role of *Vayu*, described as the "*Yantra Tantra Dhra*," responsible for physiological functioning via the *Nadi*. The unimpeded flow of *Vayu* through the *Nadi* is crucial for overall health. *Acharya Charaka's* mention of *Vayu* residing abundantly in *Twacha* (skin) highlights the tactile sensation's dependency on *Vayu*, suggesting the efficacy of *Tailabhyanga* (foot massage) in maintaining *Vayu* equilibrium, particularly *Vyana* and *Kurma Vayu*, thus benefiting ocular health. Hence, *Padabhyanga* emerges as a pivotal practice for promoting eye wellness, aligning with the concept of *Chakshushya*.

Key words: *Ayurveda, Padabhyanga, Chakshusya, Nadi, Netra Sharir*

INTRODUCTION

Reiterated across various ancient texts including those by *Acharya Charaka*^[1] *Acharya Vagbhata*^[2] and *Acharya Sushruta* the practices of *Padabhyanga*, *Padatrdharana* *Prakshalana*, and *Padapooja* are underscored as beneficial for eye health, termed as *Dhrishti Prasadaka* or *Chakshusya*. *Acharya Vagbhata*,

in *Uttar Tantra* chapter 16, elaborates on the connection between the foot and the eyes, stating that two *Nadi* originating from the foot's midpoint ascend to the *Shirah Pradesh* and extend to the *Netra*, influencing ocular activities.^[3] These *Nadi* are susceptible to contamination, affecting eye function, emphasizing the importance of foot care. Similar descriptions are found in *Acharya Bhavprakash*^[4] and *Acharya Charaka's* works.

To grasp the impact of foot-originating *Nadi* on eye function, understanding *Sharir Nadi*, including their location, connections, and functions, is essential. While detailed descriptions are limited in major *Ayurveda* texts, ancient *Veda* and *Upanishada* teachings, especially those related to *Yoga*, offer profound insights into this domain. Let's explore further:

The concept of *Nadi*

Ayurveda wisdom transcends mere physicality, delving into subtler dimensions of the *Sharir* (body). It categorizes the *Sharir* into three realms:

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1. *Sthool Sharir*: the tangible, visible parts discernible to the naked eye.
2. *Sukshma Sharir*: the subtle aspects that elude direct perception.
3. *Karana Sharir*: the spiritual essence.

Highlighting the significance of the *Apratyaksha* (unseen), *Ayurveda* emphasizes that what is imperceptible to the human eye (*Apratyaksha*) surpasses the visible.^[5] The *Nadi*, associated with *Chakra* and *Prana*, belong to the *Sukshma Sharir* and *Karana Sharir*, serving as pivotal points for physiological and pathological functions.

In *Vaishishth Samhita*,^[6] the human body is described as measuring 96 fingers (*Swa-Angula Pramana*). The *Dehmadhya*, positioned two *Angula* above the *Guda* and two *Angula* below the *Medhra*, houses the triangular-shaped *Shikhi Sthana*, symbolizing a fiery locus akin to heated gold (*Mooladhara Chakra*). The *Kanda* is situated nine *Angula* above the *Dehmadhya* and enveloped by various bodily substances. From the *Kanda* emerges the *Sushumana*, the principal *Nadi* traversing the *Merudanda* (spinal cord). Encircling the *Sushumana* is the *Nadi-Chakra*, the origin of the body's 72,000 *Nadi*, spreading like branches of a tree in all directions.

Please note: According to the *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, the position of the *Kanda* is situated between the *Nabhi* and *Mredhra*. While the traditional count of *Nadi* in *Yoga Shastra* and *Ayurveda* stands at 72,000, alternative references such as the *Shiv Samhita* propose a broader range extending to 3 crore 50 lakhs. These *Nadi* encompass both the *Sthoola* (visible to the naked eye) and *Sukshma* (invisible) realms. However, for practical purposes, the functionality of the body is often attributed to 14 main *Nadi*.^[7]

The *Nadi* related to eye & lower limb (As per *Yoga Upanishad*)

Among these 14 *Nadi*, the most spiritually significant one is the *Sushumna* or *Bhrama Nadi*, which is associated with the awakening of Kundalini, the practice of Yoga, and the attainment of *Moksha*.^[8] The remaining 13 *Nadi*, namely *Ida*, *Pingala*, *Gandhari*,

Hastijihva, *Kuhu*, *Sarasvati*, *Pusha*, *Sankini*, *Payasvani*, *Varuna*, *Alambusha*, *Vishvodari* and *Yashasvini*, are primarily linked with bodily functions. Although there are differing opinions regarding the pathways and functions of these *Nadi*, prevalent theories in *Yoga Upanishad* and *Veda* can be categorized into two perspectives.

The first viewpoint posits the existence of 14 significant *Nadi* in the body. This perspective finds convergence in texts such as *Vaishishth Samhita*, *Jabal Darshana Upanishad*, *Varah Samhita*, *Shandilya Samhita*, and *Darshan Samhita*.

In all the aforementioned *Yoga Upanishads*, it is evident that the *Gandhari Nadi* is commonly associated with the left eye, while the *Pusa Nadi* is related to the right eye. It's important to note that these *Nadi* are not directly connected to the foot. Instead, the *Nadi* extending from the *Nadi-Chakra* to the foot are *Yashasvini* and *Hastjihva* on the right and left side respectively. Additionally, two *Nadi* spread over the right and left sides of the body are *Varana* and *Vishwodhara*.

Thus, it appears that not a single *Nadi*, but an interconnected network of these *Nadi*, forms a pathway connecting the foot to the eye.

Summarizing, on the right side of the body, the pathway from the foot to the eye consists of the *Yashshvini-Pusa Nadi* connected by the *Varana Nadi*. Meanwhile, on the left side, the connection from the foot to the eye involves the *Hastjihva-Gandhari Nadi*, connected via the *Vishwodhara Nadi*.

An interesting observation from the *Jabala Darshana* is that *Varana Nadi* is believed to pacify all *Papa Karma* performed by *Gyana* and *Karma Indriya* (*Asatamyia Indriya Sanyoga*). Analyzing its position and function, *Varana* alone could be the *Nadi* associated from the foot to the eye.

The second prevalent view names only 10 significant *Nadi* in *Upanishads*, namely: *Shiv Sarwodaya*, *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, *Yoga Chudamani Undishyad*, *Siddha Siddhant Padathi*, and *Tri Shikha Bhrama Upanishad*.

Notably, *Sarasvati*, *Varuni*, *Visvodara*, and *Payasvini* are omitted from this list of 14 main *Nadi*.

According to this second perspective, *Gandhari* and *Hasthjihva* are considered the *Nadi* of the left and right eye, respectively. However, it's important to note that they originate from the *Nadi Kanda* and are not directly connected to the feet. Nonetheless, given that each of these main *Nadi* gives off hundreds of sub-branches spread throughout the body, it is possible that branches of *Gandhari* and *Hasthjihva* are related to the feet and/or lower limb, possibly through the *Kaushki Nadi*, which spreads over the lower limb.

The *Nadi* related to eye & lower limb (As per *Varmam Shastra*)^[9,10]

The reference to the *Nadi* associated with the eyes is also found in the classical text of *Varmam Shastra*, where it is described to run from the foot to the eye. Specifically, three *Nadi* are directly related to both the feet and eyes: *Pinglai Nadi*, *Alamburudhan Nadi*, and *Gandhari Nadi*. Upon thorough examination of the *Varmam Nadi* pathways, it becomes evident that these three conduits serve as the channels linking the lower limbs to the eyes.

Additionally, the *Sanguni Nadi* seems to have a connection to the eyes. Originating from the base of the penis, it travels through the *Vishudhi Chakra*, reaching the *Pidari Varmam* (External occipital protuberance), and then branches out to supply the entire face.

It's worth noting that these *Nadi* are also associated with the *Varmam* Points, which are vital points of *Prana* located on the body surface. Specifically concerning the eyes, they are linked to the *Nakshatrakalam Varmam*, located at the outer canthus of the eye.

Nadi related to eye & lower limb as per *Sen Sib*

(Thai indigenous medicine/ Tibetan Buddhism)^[11]

Interestingly, even in the *Sib Sen* system, 10 *Nadi* are mentioned, which bear striking resemblance to those mentioned in ancient Vedic literature. Among these,

three are related to the eyes and lower limbs, as outlined below:

- *Sen Sahatsarangsi*, also known as *Sahadsarangsi* or *Hadsarangsi*, influences organs such as the eyes, lower abdomen, and chest. It follows a distinct pathway from the left foot to the left eye and is utilized in treating conditions such as facial paralysis, toothache, and eye ailments. This *Nadi* appears to be similar to the *Gandhari Nadi*.
- *Sen Thawari*, the counterpart of *Sen Sahatsarangsi* on the right side of the body, bears resemblance to the *Hasthjihva Nadi/Pusa Nadi* and *Alamburudhan Nadi*.
- *Sen Kalathari*, also known as *Kaniataree*, *Kanlataree Galadhari*, or *Gandhari*, though seemingly synonymous with *Gandhari*, functionally resembles the *Varuna Nadi*, which is distributed throughout the body.

The vital role of *Nadi* and *Prana* in bodily functions

After comprehensively examining the *Nadi* associated with the *Pada* and *Netra*, including their origins, pathways, and connections to various body parts, let's delve into their functional significance.

There is unanimous agreement that *Vayu*, or vital air, flows through all 72,000 *Nadi*, with 10 types of *Vayu* governing essential bodily functions.^[12] Among these, *Prana*, *Apana*, *Samana*, *Udana*, and *Vyana* are deemed most crucial, as described in Ayurvedic texts.^[13] While some scholars differentiate between the *Vata* described in *Ayurveda* and the *Vayu* in *Yoga Upanishads*, they are considered synonymous in the context of *Marma* points and *Nadi*.

Acharya Charaka refers to *Vayu* as "*Yantra Tantra Dhra*,"^[14] emphasizing its pivotal role in physiological functions. *Prana*, situated below the *Kanda*, regulates the other *Vayu* and is likened to an emperor appointing officials in different regions, ensuring the smooth functioning of the body.

Vayu omnipresent in the body through the *Nadi* network, maintains equilibrium and is vital for overall health. However, when disturbed, it can lead to

diseases.^[15] Therefore, the unobstructed flow of *Vayu* through the *Nadi* is crucial for optimal health.

DISCUSSION

1. Unraveling the Pathways: Exploring the Networks Connecting Feet to Eyes

Upon thorough scrutiny of diverse sources, it becomes apparent that the intricate web of *Nadi* linking the feet to the eye's manifests in various interpretations:

A. In texts acknowledging 14 main *Nadi* (*Vaishshtha Samhita*, *Varah Samhita*, *Shandilya Samhita*, and *Darshan Samhita*):

- *Yashshvini-Pusa Nadi*, joined by *Varana Nadi*, traverses from the foot to the right eye.
- On the left side, *Hashtjihva-Gandhari Nadi*, through *Vishwodhara Nadi*, connects the foot to the eye.
- *Varana Nadi* functions independently based on its location and purpose.

B. In texts recognizing 10 main *Nadi* (*Shiv Sarwodaya*, *Dhyan Bindu Upanishyad*, *Yoga Chudamani Undishyad*, *Siddha Siddhant Padathi*, and *Tri Shikha Bhrama Upnishyad*):

- *Hashtjihva* extends from the navel to the right eye.
- *Gandhari Nadi* courses from the navel to the left eye.

C. According to *Varmam Shastra*:

- *Gandhari Nadi* travels from the left eye to the right lower limb.
- *Alamburudhan Nadi* originates from the right eye, extending to both lower limbs.
- *Pinglai Nadi* commences from the left big toe, traversing to both eyes and terminating at the right nostril.

D. In the Sib Sen system:

- *Sen Sahatsarangsi* links the left eye to the left foot.
- *Sen Thawari* connects the right eye to the right foot.

- *Sen Kalathari* spreads across the body from foot to both eyes, resembling *Varuna Nadi*.

Notably, the 14 main *Nadi* perspective furnishes a detailed trajectory relative to *Sushumana*, whereas the 10 main *Nadi* perspective primarily provides nomenclature and targeted body parts. Furthermore, the absence of *Nadi* reaching the foot in the latter viewpoint, barring the mention in *Tri-Shikhi Bharam Uapnishyad* (*Kaushki Nadi*), lends credence to the former's precision. Even in *Varmam Shastra*, *Gandhari* and *Alamburudhan Nadi* are intertwined with *Ida Nadi*, *Asani Nadi*, and *Sangun Nadi*, sharing common *Varmam* points along their paths.

2. Exploring the connection between foot massage and vision enhancement

Upon grasping the relationship between *Nadi* and *Prana*, the influence of foot massage on vision becomes clearer.

In *Charaka Samhita's Sutra Sthan* chapter five, it is stated that *Vayu* predominantly resides in the *Twacha* (the sensory organ of touch).^[16] This *Vayu*, flows throughout the body via the *Nadi* system, carrying tactile sensations. Additionally, oils possess *Vata* pacifying properties, thus daily foot massage helps maintain *Vayu* equilibrium and prevents *Vata*-related disorders.^[17]

Among the ten types of *Vayu*, *Vyana* and *Kurma Vayu* within the *Nadi* system are responsible for eye function.^[18] By directly connecting the feet to the eyes, foot massage impacts *Vayu* equilibrium, ensuring proper eye function.

The term "*Pada*" refers to the entire limb, not just the feet, according to linguistic sources and *Charaka's* descriptions of *Padabhyanga* benefits. Hence, foot massage encompasses the entire lower limb, offering comprehensive benefits for vision enhancement.

In *Varmam Shastra*, the *Nadi Gandhari* and *Alambudharan* originate nine fingers above the heel, emphasizing the importance of massaging the entire lower limb, including the feet, for effective vision enhancement.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it's apparent that not individual *Nadi*, but an interconnected network of these pathways, intricately link the foot to the eye. Additionally, *Acharya Vagbhatta's* elucidation of two *Nadi* running from *Padamadhya* to *Netra*, reaching the *Shirah* Pradesh or head, and subsequently, via various routes, attaining the eye, underscores the complexity of this phenomenon. The term '*Bahudha*' in the *Shloka* further elucidates this viewpoint.^[19] After thorough exploration of the intricacies of the *Nadi* connecting the feet and eyes, it's evident that they play a crucial role in the body's functionality. The consensus on *Vayu's* presence in all 72,000 *Nadi* underscores its importance in regulating vital bodily functions. Understanding the intricate relationship between *Nadi* and *Prana* illuminates the profound impact of foot massage on vision. *Charaka Samhita* highlights the pervasive presence of *Vayu* in the *Twacha* and its role in maintaining bodily equilibrium via the *Nadi* system. The holistic approach to foot massage, encompassing the entire limb, resonates with *Varmam Shastra's* emphasis on comprehensive care for optimal vision enhancement.

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