

Nadi Vigyan - The Art and Science of Pulse Reading

Compared with other subjects in Ayurveda, relatively little information is available on *nadi vigyan*. Most Ayurvedic classics do not discuss practical details of pulse reading and only mention it in brief as a skill that should be learned directly from an experienced *vaidya* (traditional Ayurvedic physician). Contemporary Ayurvedic textbooks often skim the subject in a similar way or merely present information collected from various medical traditions about different styles of pulse reading. Although there are numerous stories and testimonies available that describe the incredible diagnostic abilities of *nadi vaidyas*, today's students of Ayurveda are rarely being taught this skill anymore and pulse reading has become widely thought of as a 'lost' technique.

However, there are still authentic, unbroken lineages of *nadi vaidyas* in India that have kept the practice of Ayurvedic pulse reading alive by passing it on in the classical way from master to student. One of them is the *Siddhaved* lineage, currently represented by Dr. Pankaj Naram – our mentor who taught and trained us in this tradition. *Siddhaved* practitioners have been applying the art and science of pulse reading for 23 generations not only as a diagnostic technique, but also as a means of 'entering into the heart' of their patients in order to create trust-based therapeutic relationships as well as powerful experiences of transformation. Apart from these applications of *nadi vigyan*, which refer specifically to the clinical and therapeutic context with patients, the dedicated practice of pulse reading offers yet another dimension for experiencing transformation: inner self-development. In the following, we want to share some of those personal benefits we gained over the past ten years as a result of our practice, and which have significantly influenced our professional as well as our private life.

"Knowing is not doing; doing is doing" was the first and probably most important basic principle of pulse reading that we learned from our mentor Dr. Naram in 1998 at his Ayurvedic clinic in Mumbai. Despite its seeming triviality, this statement contains wisdom of profound depth, which we realised only much later. The first two years of our Ayurvedic studies occurred completely under the motto of 'doing': all knowledge we gained in this time arose directly out of practical experience in the clinic – either with patients or on our own bodies. It was only when we began to study at university in London that we fully appreciated how effective this period of practical learning had been. The prevalent academic obsession with text and reference, the modern scientific rhetoric that is far removed from reality and the lack of practically oriented transmission of knowledge made us soon understand that academia's ability to impart the Ayurvedic 'Science of Life' to students in an authentic and inspiring way is rather limited. Although we studied unquestionably important theory, its effective integration and application when dealing with patients (and ourselves!) only occurred due to our practical studies with Dr. Naram. Ultimately, knowledge is nothing but *information*. Doing, however, creates opportunities for inner *transformation*...

Another basic concept of pulse reading, which is derived from the knowing-doing principle, is the polarity of masculine and feminine energy. Within this context, structure, thought, theory, analysis, memory and past are attributed to the left or masculine half of the brain, while the feminine qualities of the right brain are understood to give access to observation, emotion, intuition, creativity, vision and future. Using this distinction, it

becomes rather obvious that pulse reading is a right brain activity, and that gentle, flexible and 'feminine' energies are required to 'enter into the heart' of patients. Learning pulse reading and the associated communication of the heart has helped both of us, for instance, to engage with others as well as our own selves in a more loving and respectful way. The fascinating example of our teacher Dr. Naram, who approaches people with abundant love, full attention and infectious enthusiasm, has deeply touched and motivated us to also choose the 'way of the heart' for our work and life practice. As a result of this decision, we enjoy today a much more conscious experience of our innate gender qualities – the creative power of the masculine as well as feminine creativity and motherly love. Consequently, our relationship as life partners and also those with our family and friends have been blessed with tremendous healing and love...

Siddhaved nadi vaidyas practise pulse reading as *seva*: selfless service to others. The dedicated practice of *seva* naturally creates a transformative experience of the universal law of giving and receiving: the more one gives to others, the more abundantly the universe provides for oneself. In our own experience, the phenomenal help and support we are privileged to receive today on a daily basis cannot be described with words. Suffice it here to say that we currently cannot imagine anything more rewarding and satisfying than the serving work in our Ayurveda and pulse reading practice.

In 2006 we were asked by Dr. Smita Naram, Dr. Pankaj Naram's wife, to start passing on our practical skills and experiences to colleagues on an Ayurvedic . Since then we have been sharing the 'guru's nectar' (Dr. Naram's affectionate term for the skills and the wisdom transmitted by all *Siddhaved* masters) with Ayurveda students, practitioners, therapists and GPs in practice-oriented workshops in England, Austria and Germany. The teaching and the interactive work with seminar participants have provided us with a wonderful opportunity to continuously discover new dimensions of pulse reading. Thus we are privileged to experience our own development as pulse readers as an ongoing process of personal transformation in line with the belief that 'education is the sacred business of becoming your self'.



With Gratitude to all *Siddhaved* Gurus