



CLINICAL CONSIDERATION OF CONCEPT OF NAIL ANATOMY AS PER BASIC TEXT OF *AYURVEDA*

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ABSTRACT

All the organs and their appendages in the human body have a definite utility in the body. Useless organs and appendages have been destroyed in the course of evolution. *Nakha* (nails) are the protective requirement of the human body. In this review article, *Nakha Sharir*, which is neglected structure from the point of view of physical subject, but which has definitive clinical, diagnostic and curative significance in *ayurveda* has been described with text evidence. This article aims to review all the significant aspects of *nakha sharir* and address the clinical consideration of *nakha sharir* stated in *bruhatryee*. Review of the references from basic *ayurvedic Samhita*, will help to established the holistic concept of *Nakha sharir*.

Keywords: Nail anatomy, *Nakha sharir*, *Bruhatryee*, Clinical aspect, review.

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INTRODUCTION

Nakha sharira has been describe in *ayurveda* from different aspect. Nails are modified claws in human. It is a small gift from evolution. Nails are not vital for human existence, nor life, as that of lungs or heart. But they can be considered as a window tool for assessing the healthy conditions of body elements. *Ayurveda* has its peculiar view and philosophy behind the *nakha sharir*, which is different from that of the modern anatomy. In this article the references scattered in *charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita* and *Vagbhat Samhita* has been studied and the holistic concept of *nakha* as a *upanga* (sub part) from clinical applied aspect has been brought into the focus, because despite being easily accessible this small organ has not been researched much to date.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The references related with *Nakha* were compile from the basic text of *ayurveda*, *charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita* and *Vagbhat Samhita*.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1.To study the concept of *Nakha sharir* (Nail)described in *Bruhatryee*.
- 2.To established the importance of *nakha* as a diagnostic and prognostic tool in clinical aspect.

- 3.To discuss and review the holistic concept of *nakha* from the *ayurvedic* perspective.

LITERARY REVIEW

Development of *Nakha*

Sushrut clearly mentions the origins of the nails, as the actual corpus has been researched by him^[1].

Nakha is a *jangam sharir bhava*^[2] All mammals are having *nakha* as an appendage. According to *Ayurved* *Nakha* is a *Pitruj bhava*.^[3] The heredity of these structures comes from the father.

Relation between the hair follicles, incisor teeth, nerves and nails also established by modern sciences. These are the appendages originated from an ectodermal derived epithelium and a neural crest or mineralized or keratinized substances that are secreted throughout the animal's life.^[4] *Ayurved* also described the same origin of all these elements.^[5] The number of nails counted as 20.^[6] Ten in hands and 10 in feet. The nails are the protrusion of the *kandara* present in *Hast* and *Paad* region, they are the tips of those *Kandara* (Tendons).^[7] *Nakha* has its static instinctive visibility and toughness.

When *dhatu* and *updhatu* are formed in the body, during their metabolic transformation from one *dhatu* into another, *mala* were formed as a bi product of that metabolic

activity. Nails and hairs are said to be the *mala* of *asthi dhatu* and it is this *malabhag* that nails were get nourishment^[8] Therefore in nail deformity or disease ayurvedic physician has to cure the metabolic defects of *asthi dhatu*.

Normal healthy Nakha –

In a healthy person, it is considered natural for nails to be *tanu* (Thin), *aarakt*(red), *unnat*(elevated). According to *ayurveda*, the *snigdhata* (luster) and *tamratva*(redness)of nails were relayed to *rakta dhatu* ^[9]. *Dhrudatwa* (firmness)and *kathinya* (hardness) is related with *asthi dhatu* ^[10]. *Snigdhata* (luster), *samhata*(firmness)and shine of nails is related with *shukra dhatu* ^[11]. on the contrary if these *guna* are not present then there is a defect in the metabolism of those *dhatu*s. Status of particularly *rakta*, *asthi* and *shukra dhatu* can be diagnosed and inferred from nails. *Raktasar* person is having *snigdha* and *raktavarni* nails Especially *snigdhata* in nails also denotes *medasarata* and *sthulata* in nails indicates *asthisarta*.

Nakha subparts.

The subparts of nails describe in *Samhita* are,

- 1) *Nakha agra* – Free and non-sensitive part of nail^[12]
- 2) *Nakha mansa* – Nail bed ^[13]
- 3) *Nakhantar* – Hyponychium ^[14]
- 4) *Upnakha*- Lunula ^[15]

Wound or ailment formed in sub nail parts are very difficult to treat ^[16]. *Nakhantar* (Hyponychium) is a very sensitive part of the nails. Therefore, the measures to bring the mind to consciousness by giving *suchi vedhana* (prick stimulation), burn or pain in the hyponychium region are described in *Murchha vyadhi sandhya nasha* (unconsciousness) ^[17]. Due to its sensitiveness, *kshar chikitsa* is also strictly prohibited on this region of Nakha ^[18].

Diagnostic significance of Nakha

Due to the easily accessible and clearly visible position of *Nakha*, the metabolic state of *sharir dhatu* can be determined by its close examination.

Rakta, *Asthi*, *shukra* and *meda dhatu* is closely associated with the metabolism and healthy appearance of *nakha*, therefore the pathological conditions of *kashya* and *vrudhhi* of these *dhatu*s have a direct impact on the nails. *Kunakha* diseases of *Nakha* causes because of defective metabolism in *asthidhatu*. In *Kunakha* disease, nail become black, dry and rough ^[19].

Upnakha or *Chippa* diseases is exclusively the diseases of *Nakha*. It is also called as *Akshat roga*, when *Pitta* and *Vata dosha* get vitiated *asthi dhatu*, leads to inflammatory changes at *Nakha*, causing severe pain at *Nakha* along with fever ^[20].

We get multiple references related to *Nakha* compilation of sign and symptoms associated *sharir* in *bruhatryee*, which gives us a good with *Nakha* in various disease.

Table No.1: Signs and symptoms associated with *Nakha* in various disease

Serial Number	Disease	Sign and symptoms related to <i>Nakha</i>	Modern terminology
1	<i>Asthi Kshya</i> ^[21]	<i>Nakhabhanga</i>	Nail brittleness
2	<i>Asthikshaya</i> ^[22]	<i>Nakharoukshya</i>	Nail dryness
3	<i>Vataj Arsha</i> ^[23]	<i>Krushna Nakha</i>	Greyish color of nails
4	<i>Pittaj Arsha</i> ^[23]	<i>Peet nakha</i>	Yellowish ting nails
5	<i>Kaphaj Arsha</i> ^[23]	<i>Shwet nakha</i>	Whitish nail
5	<i>Prameha poorvaroop</i> ^[24]	<i>Nakha vrudhhi</i>	Abnormal growth of nail.
6	<i>Pittaj Udara</i> ^[25]	<i>Peet nakha</i>	Yellow tinge of nails
7	<i>Kaphaj Udara</i>	<i>Shukla nakha</i>	Pale nails
8	Poisonous food handling ^[26]	<i>Nakhachyuti</i>	Shedding of nails
8	<i>Pandu</i>	<i>Pandu varna nakha</i>	Anemic nails
9	<i>Vaat jwara</i> ^[27]	<i>Ruksha and arunvarni nakha</i>	Dry and reddish nails
10	<i>Pittaj jwara</i>	<i>Harit haridra Nakha</i>	Greenish yellow tinge in nails
11	<i>Kaphaj jwara</i>	<i>Shweta nakha</i>	Whitish nails
12	<i>Vataj gulma</i> ^[28]	<i>Krushna, arun, parush nakha</i>	Greyish, reddish tinge with roughness of nails.
13	<i>Pittaj gulma</i>	<i>Harit haridra nakha</i>	Greenish yellowish nails.
14	<i>Shleshma gulma</i>	<i>Shwet nakha</i>	Whitish nails
15	<i>Shonit krumi</i> ^[29]	<i>Nakha dhwansa</i>	Destruction of nails
16	<i>Kamala</i> ^[30]	<i>Haridra nakha</i>	Yellowish nails
17	<i>Shleshma visarpa</i> ^[31]	<i>Shweta nakha</i>	Whitish nails
18	<i>Maha Vaat vyadhi</i> ^[32]	<i>Nakhabheda</i>	Braking of nails

19	<i>Kshaya rog poorvaroop</i> ^[33]	<i>Nakha ativrudhhee</i>	Excessive and fast growth of nails.
20	<i>Darvikar Snake bite</i> ^[34]	<i>Shyaav nakha</i>	Cyanosed nails
21	<i>Rajimat Snake bite</i> ^[35]	<i>Shweta nakha</i>	Whitish nails

Nail as a Prakruti assessment tool :

Healthy Nakha are used as an important determinant to determine the genetic

psychosomatic internal environment of human body called the sharir Prakruti and Saar Prakruti.

Table No. 2: Nakha in different Prakruti

Serial number	Sharir Prakruti	Nakha as a Prakruti determinant
1	<i>Vaat Prakruti</i> ^[36]	<i>Sphutanti, Ruksha nakha</i>
2	<i>Pitta Prakruti</i> ^[37]	<i>Tamra nakha</i>
4	<i>Rakta Saar</i> ^[38]	<i>Snigdha, raktavarni nakha</i>
5	<i>Meda Saar</i> ^[39]	<i>Snigdha nakha</i>
6	<i>Asthi Saar</i> ^[40]	<i>Sthul nakha</i>

Sushrut noted an important observation related to diagnostic aspect of *nakha*. *Arun* (reddish), *Krushna* (blackish), *Neel* (bluish), *Rakta* (reddish), *asita* (greyish), *Pandu* (whitish) *varna* (color), if any discoloration appears on *nakha* or in *purish* (stool), *mutra* (urine), *Netra* (eye), or on the face of patient, then physician must examine the patient for possibility of *hrudroga* (heart diseases) or *panduroga* (anemia) or *Udara* (ascites), *gulma* (cyst) or *arsha* (piles) or *yakrut, pleeha vyadhi* (liver or spleen disease) ^[41]. Healthy *nakha* are smooth, without pits or grooves. They're uniform in color and consistency and free of

spots or discoloration. Any deviation from above healthy features indicates an abnormality.

Nail as a Ayu Pramana (life span) indicator

Apart from its diagnostic value, *ayurveda* also stated some unique aspect of this *Shaarir* structure. *Arista Lakshana* are the symptoms which point towards the approaching death in a patient. In *Indriyasthan* and *sharir sthana* multiple references are there which shows involvement of *nakha in arista Lakshana*. ^[42] *Vagbhat* has mention the external body parameters to predict the long-life span of an individual. These are called as *Prashasta*

Prakruti. There he mention that *tanu* (thin and transparent), *unnat*(convex), and *aarakt* (pinkish) *nakha* are the indicator of *deerghayu*.^[43]

Nail as a cause of infection

Nakha are *Jangam* (animal) *Visha* (poison).^[44] It grows continuously and consistently even in the aging of body. ^[45] Therefore as a personal hygiene and as a aseptic precaution, in *Swasthavrutta*, *ayurveda* advice to trim the nails thrice in a month.^[46] Particularly for interns, physician, surgeons, medical assistants for uninterrupted *chikitsa* procedure and particularly midwives during the deliveries of the babies.^[47]

Nail as a foreign body

Nakha treated as a *Shalya* (foreign body). ^[48] It is one of the *jangam visha adhisthana* (poison from animal origin).^[49] Hence wound or injuries caused by *nakha* are consider as a *agantuj vrana* (infected wound).^[50] It is one of the *hetu* in *Updansha Vyadhi*.^[51] *Rakta dhatu* get vitiated particularly by wounds by nails. This leads to *pidika* (swelling), *daha*(warmth), *jwara*(fever), and *paak* (pus formation). wounds due to *nakha* are *Vaat prakopaka*, which was relieved by '*koshna tail; sinchana*'.^[53] Inflammation due to nail scratching is cured by *Bhringraj Rasa* application.^[54] Also *Haridra* and *Gairika lepa* is

used very effectively.^[53] *Asthapana Basti* is very effective in *Nakha doshaj vikara*.^[55]

Regular nail trimming also assist the *Sharir Pushti*, cleanliness, it also makes one's personality trustworthy.^[56] To bite nails or tapping forcefully with nails are socially prohibited by *ayurveda*.^[57]

Nail as a surgical instrument

Nakha are called '*anushahstra*'. This is a unique concept of *ayurveda*. *Anushahstra* means uses of non-surgical things as a surgical instrument to perform basic surgical procedure. *Nakha* is one of the *anushahstra*, used for *bhedan karma*, in those patients who were afraid by the sight of surgical instruments, *nakha* used to performed extraction, *chhedana*, *bhedan karma*.^[58]

Sushruta invented *Nakhashashtra* which was 8 anguli in length, fitted into the fingers.^[59]

Nakha also consider as a *upyantra*, which are accessory or subordinate instruments, used to remove the foreign body.^[60]

References from *Samhita* indicates that *Nakha* were used as a measurements' in *kalpasthana antarnakah musthi* (closed fist), and *Sa-nakhamushti* (open fist) measure used to measured *shodhan kalpa* quantity. *Vamana kalpa* were taken by *antarnakah musthi* and *Virechan kalpa* were taken by *Sa-nakha musthi*. ^[61]

Medicinal use of Nails

Animals' hoofs, claws were used for *dhupan karma*, even as *Udvartana* in *Grahapratisedha, unmad, apasmar vyadhi*.^[62]
^[63] Burnt finger nails smell like burnt hair, both contain keratin, Hooves and nails also contain keratin protein contain Sulphur compound. The smell of burnt hair can cling to the nostrils for days, because of the strong smell after burn, nails were used in above disease as a *sandhya prabodhana*.

DISCUSSION

Shaarir of any structure described in Ayurveda, is an applied Sharira. External attributes like tongue, skin, hair, nails can be a strong indicator of probable health issues occurring in the body. Based on this article, following are the areas of imbalance that can be assessed through nail analysis includes Bone health status^[21], Prameha^[24], dosha dominance in ascites^[25], poisonous food^[26], anemia^[41], jaundice^[30], dosha dominance in Jwara^[27], Krumi (parasite), lung diseases^[29], heart issues^[41], liver issues^[41], lung disorders^[33], spleen disorders^[41], Vata/pitta/Kapha constitution^[36], rakta/meda and asthi Saar constitution^{[38][39][40]}.

Ayurved gave stress on nail hygiene particularly for health care professionals. Included as a must do rituals in dinacharya. In countries like India, where one is accustomed to using their bare hands for almost every

purpose, nail trimming becomes a crucial part of hand hygiene. CDC (center for disease control and prevention) and WHO had a particular guideline for nail care for health care professionals.

Medicinal use of nail along with other contains is still an unexplored area. Strong smell due to burn nails of humans or animals were used in *dhupan* to regain the consciousness of the unconscious patient.

CONCLUSION

Anatomical, physiological, diagnostic, surgical, medicinal and social aspect related to *nakha* as stated in *bruhatryee* has been compiled and logically elaborated in this review article. All the references quoted by *Bruhatryee* have been considered to establish the holistic concept of *nakha*, so that *Shaarir* scholars can access all the references of *nakha* from this one article. Similar to modern medicine, *Nakha* is used for physical examination, especially in anemia and jaundice. Apart from that, examination of *nakha* specially for *arista Lakshana* is a unique *ayurveda* concept. Involvement of *nakha* in heart, liver, spleen disorder is also an important clinical reference that will help the physician for diagnosis. Medicinal use of *Nakha* is entirely unnoticed area for further clinical research.

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