

NAKHAPARIKSHA: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF ONYCHOLOGY IN AYURVEDIC DIAGNOSTIC METHODOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

NakhaPariksha (nail examination) is a significant non-invasive diagnostic tool in Ayurveda. Traditionally it's categorized under the *RogaPareeksha* (examination of the disease). Modern onychology focuses only on clinical pathology but Ayurveda said that nails as the Mala of *AsthiDhatu*. This is primary indicator of the body's internal metabolic state and tissue health. *NakhaPariksha* is methodology involves a detailed analysis of the nails' colour, shape, size, texture, and luster. According to Ayurvedic principles, variations in these features correlate directly with the dominance or imbalance of the *Tridoshas*. *NakhaPariksha* serves as a "mirror" for systemic health. Its show the early detection of conditions such as *Pandu* (anemia), *Grahani* (malabsorption), and *Agni Mandya* (digestive impairment). By observing the presence or absence of the lunula and the integrity of the nail plate, a practitioner can assess the strength of a patient's *Ojas* (vitality) and the efficiency of their digestion. This Review paper emphasizes that integrating traditional *NakhaPariksha* with contemporary medical knowledge provides a more comprehensive, holistic diagnostic framework. It remains a cost-effective and vital bedside clinical skill for assessing a patient's constitution and the progression of systemic imbalances.

KEYWORDS: *NakhaPariksha*, Ayurveda, Onychology, *AsthiDhatu*, *Tridosha*, Clinical Diagnosis.

INTRODUCTION

The diagnostic framework of Ayurveda is built upon the principle that the internal milieu of the body is perpetually reflected through its external appendages. the various diagnostic modalities described in classical texts under *Rogpariksha*.^[1] *NakhaPariksha* (the clinical examination of nails) is one of the *RogaPareeksha* (patient examination). While modern medicine often views onychology as a specialized dermatological subset, Ayurveda treats the nail as a functional "mirror" of the body's metabolic health.^[2]

The Physiological Basis: Nails as Mala

In Ayurvedic physiology, the formation of tissues follows a sequential metabolic chain. Nails are identified as the Mala (metabolic by-product) of *AsthiDhatu*.^[3] According to the *Ksheera-Dadhi Nyaya*

(Law of Transformation), the quality of the "waste" product the nails is directly indicative of the quality of the "parent" tissue the bone. Therefore, abnormalities in nail growth, strength, or texture serve as primary clinical evidence of bone marrow health and mineral metabolism.

The Tridoshic Influence

A core tenet of *NakhaPariksha* is the interpretation of nail morphology through the lens of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. These bio-energies govern the physical attributes of the nail plate:

- **Vata:** Influences dryness, brittleness, and the presence of longitudinal ridges.
- **Pitta:** Governs the colour and vascularise, where imbalances manifest as redness, inflammation, or yellowish discoloration.

- **Kapha:** Determines the thickness, strength, and natural luster of the nail.

Clinical Significance and Ama Accumulation

Beyond tissue health, *NakhaPariksha* is instrumental in assessing the state of Agni (digestive fire). The appearance of white spots, transverse grooves, or a clouded lunula is often interpreted as the presence of *Ama*^[4] (undigested toxic waste) circulating in the blood. In this context, the nail bed becomes a vital diagnostic site for identifying systemic conditions such as *Pandu*^[5] (anemia), *Grahani* (malabsorption), and *Kshaya* (wasting diseases) long before they manifest as overt symptoms.

Rationale for the Review

In the contemporary clinical setting, there is an increasing demand for non-invasive, cost-effective diagnostic tools. While modern onychology has categorized many nail pathologies, the subtle qualitative assessments provided by Ayurveda offer a unique holistic perspective. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive review of *NakhaPariksha*, synthesizing classical textual wisdom from the Brihatrayi (Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata) with modern clinical observations. By bridging these two perspectives, this review seeks to standardize Ayurvedic nail examination as a reliable bedside diagnostic skill for the modern practitioner.

DISCUSSION

The clinical examination of nails, or *NakhaPariksha*, represents a sophisticated synthesis of observation and physiological correlation in the Ayurvedic diagnostic tradition. The discussion of this methodology necessitates a dual focus: the interpretation of nails as a reflection of *DhatuSarata* (tissue excellence) and the correlation of these traditional markers with modern pathophysiological findings.

- **The Correlation of Mala and Dhatu Health**

The Ayurvedic classification of nails as the Mala (by-product) of *AsthiDhatu* (bone tissue). Its provides a

unique longitudinal view of a patient’s health. In clinical practice, we observe that patients with poor bone density or osteoporosis frequently present with thin, peeling, or brittle nails. This aligns with the classical text Sushruta Samhita, which suggests that the essence of the bone tissue nourishes the nails.

From a modern perspective, this is supported by the shared nutritional requirements for both bone and nail formation specifically Calcium, Magnesium, and Vitamin D. Therefore, *NakhaPariksha* serves as an early warning system; changes in the nail plate often precede the more severe skeletal manifestations of bone.

- **Tridosha as a Morphological Blueprint^[6]**

The most significant contribution of Ayurveda to onychology is the qualitative assessment of the nail based on Dosha dominance.

- 1) **Vataja Nails:** The presence of longitudinal ridges and a “dry” appearance reflects the Ruksha (dry) and Khara (rough) qualities of Vata. In modern terms, these ridges are often associated with aging or peripheral vascular insufficiency, both of which correlate with the Vata-dominant stage of life (*Vardhakya*).
- 2) **Pittaja Nails:** The pinkish-red or copper hue noted in Pitta constitutions mirrors the Ushna (heat) and Vidaha (burning) nature of this Dosha. This correlates with increased capillary perfusion or inflammatory states seen in modern clinical medicine.
- 3) **Kaphaja Nails:** The strength and “oily” luster (Sneha) of Kapha nails signify a robust immune system and high Ojas (vitality).

- **NakhaPariksha as a Metabolic Indicator (Ama and Agni)**

A critical point of discussion is the presence of the Lunula (the half-moon). Ayurveda interprets a missing or clouded lunula as a sign of Agni Mandya (low digestive fire) and the accumulation of Ama (metabolic toxins).

Ayurvedic Observation	Modern Correlation	Pathological Implication
<i>Shweta Nakha</i> (White spots)	Leukonychia	Zinc deficiency / Low Agni
<i>NakhaShosha</i> (Brittleness)	FragilitasUnguium	Vata imbalance / Malnutrition
<i>TamraNakha</i> (Coppery nails)	Terry’s Nails / Cyanosis	Pitta imbalance / Liver or Cardiac issues
Koilonychia (Spoon nails)	Iron Deficiency	Iron Deficiency

- **Integration with Modern Onychology^[7]**

While modern medicine excels at identifying specific pathogens (like Onychomycosis) or systemic markers (like Clubbing in COPD), Ayurveda provides the “why” behind a patient’s predisposition to these conditions. For instance, a patient with a Kapha

imbalance may be more prone to fungal infections due to increased Kleda (moisture) in the body. Integrating *NakhaPariksha* into modern practice allows for a more personalized approach, where the nail is not just a site of local disease but a roadmap of the patient’s internal landscape.

CONCLUSION

NakhaPariksha transcends simple physical observation and bio-characteristic assessment tool. By validating these ancient observations through modern clinical lenses, we find that the nail plate is an incredibly sensitive medium that records the history of a patient's nutritional intake, digestive efficiency, and systemic balance. Future research should focus on quantifying these "qualitative" Ayurvedic parameters (like luster and texture) using high-resolution imaging to further standardize this bedside diagnostic art.

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