

**A REVIEW ARTICLE ON NAKH SHARIR WITH MODERN ASPECTS WSR TO NAKH
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Article Received on 05/09/2026

Article Revised on 25/09/2026

Article Published on 01/10/2026

ABSTRACT

Nakh Sharir is an important component of Ayurvedic anatomy that deals with the anatomical, structural, and physiological aspects of the nails. In Ayurveda, *Nakha* is described as a Mala (waste product) of *Asthi Dhatu* and is considered an important structure for assessing the health and nutritional status of an individual. Classical Ayurvedic texts provide descriptions of *Nakha*, its characteristics, and various pathological conditions collectively referred to as *Nakh Vyadhi*. These descriptions can be correlated with several nail disorders recognized in modern medicine. The present review aims to explore the concept of *Nakh Sharir* described in classical Ayurvedic literature and correlate it with contemporary anatomical and clinical knowledge. Modern understanding considers the nail unit to comprise the nail plate, nail bed, nail matrix, nail folds, and surrounding tissues, with the nail serving important protective and functional roles. Various nail abnormalities, including changes in colour, shape, texture, thickness, and growth, may be associated with local nail diseases or systemic disorders. Conditions such as onychomycosis, onycholysis, leukonychia, koilonychia, clubbing, paronychia, and nail dystrophies can be studied in relation to the clinical descriptions of *Nakh Vyadhi*. A systematic review of Ayurvedic classical references and relevant modern literature can help establish similarities and differences between the two perspectives. Understanding *Nakh Sharir* through both Ayurvedic and modern approaches may provide a comprehensive view of nail anatomy, physiology, and pathology and may contribute to improved clinical assessment and interpretation of nail changes.

KEYWORDS: *Nakh Sharir*, *Nakha*, *Nakh Vyadhi*, *Asthi -Dhatu*, Nail Anatomy, Nail Disorders, Ayurveda, Modern Perspective.**INTRODUCTION**

Nails, known as *Nakha* in Ayurveda, are an important anatomical structure of the human body and have both protective and functional significance. The study of *Nakha* is described under *Nakh Sharir*, which can be understood as the anatomical and structural study of nails. In Ayurvedic literature, *Nakha* is considered in relation to *Asthi Dhatu* and is described as a Mala (metabolic by-product) of *Asthi Dhatu*. The condition and appearance of the nails are also considered useful indicators of the state of *Dhatu* and overall health.

Classical Ayurvedic texts describe the characteristics, formation, and clinical importance of *Nakha*. Acharya Charaka, Sushruta and Vagbhata have discussed *Nakha* in different contexts, particularly in relation to *Asthi Dhatu*, *Dhatu Sara*, *Mala*, and disease assessment. Changes in the colour, shape, texture, strength and growth of the nails may indicate abnormalities in the body and can therefore have diagnostic significance. Various pathological conditions involving the nails are described under the broader concept of *Nakh Vyadhi*.

From the modern anatomical perspective, the nail is a specialized keratinized epidermal structure situated on

the dorsal aspect of the distal phalanges of the fingers and toes. The nail unit consists of the nail plate, nail matrix, nail bed, proximal and lateral nail folds, eponychium (cuticle), and hyponychium. The nail plate is primarily composed of hard keratin and is produced mainly by the nail matrix. Nails provide protection to the distal digits, assist in fine tactile functions and manipulation, and contribute to the overall appearance of the fingers and toes.

Modern medicine recognizes numerous nail disorders, including onychomycosis, paronychia, onycholysis, leukonychia, koilonychia, clubbing, psoriasis of the nail, and various nail dystrophies. Nail changes may also occur secondary to systemic conditions such as nutritional deficiencies, anaemia, endocrine disorders, cardiovascular diseases, hepatic disorders and other systemic illnesses. Thus, examination of the nails forms an important component of clinical examination.

A comparative study of Nakh Sharir and modern nail anatomy provides an opportunity to understand the classical Ayurvedic concepts in the light of contemporary anatomical, physiological and pathological knowledge. Correlating the Ayurvedic description of Nakha and Nakh Vyadhi with modern concepts of the nail unit and nail disorders may help in developing a broader understanding of nail health and its clinical significance. The present review therefore focuses on the classical concept of Nakh Sharir, its Ayurvedic significance, and its correlation with the modern anatomical and clinical aspects of nails.

The nail is a specialized, hard, keratinized structure of the epidermis present on the dorsal surface of the terminal phalanges of fingers and toes. The complete anatomical structure is called the nail unit.

Nakha According to Ayurveda

Nakha (नख) is an important structure described in Ayurvedic texts under Sharira Rachana and is closely associated with Asthi Dhatu.

1. Definition and Classification

According to Ayurveda, Nakha refers to the nails of the fingers and toes. They are considered a visible part of the body associated with Asthi Dhatu.

Ayurvedic texts describe Nakha as a Mala of Asthi Dhatu. Therefore, the condition of the nails may reflect the status of Asthi Dhatu and the general nutritional condition of the body.

2. Nakha as Asthi Dhatu Mala

According to Charaka Samhita, Keshha, Loma and Nakha are considered the Mala (waste products) of Asthi Dhatu. Asthi Dhatu → Mala → Keshha, Loma, Nakha. This concept indicates that nails are regarded as products formed in association with the metabolism of Asthi Dhatu.

3. Relation with Dhatu Sara

Nakha is also important in the assessment of Dhatu Sara. In a person with good Asthi Sara, structures related to Asthi, including nails, are described as being well developed, strong and healthy.

Features suggestive of good Asthi Sara include

- * Strong and well-developed bones
- * Strong teeth
- * Strong nails
- * Good hair and body hair
- * Good physical strength and stability

4. Ayurvedic concept of nail formation

Ayurveda considers the formation and maintenance of Nakha in relation to Asthi Dhatu and its nourishment. The quality of the nails can therefore be influenced by:

- * Proper nutrition
- * Agni and digestion
- * Dhatu nourishment
- * Dosha balance
- * Health of Asthi Dhatu

5. Nakha as an indicator of health

Changes in the nails can provide information about the internal state of the body. Ayurveda emphasizes observation of external structures during clinical examination

Feature	
Observation	
Varna of the nail	Colour
Akriti and form	Shape
Snigdhatta	
Smoothness/lustre	
Dridhatta	
Strength/hardness	
Growth	Normal or
abnormal growth	
Texture	
Smooth or rough	
Abnormal changes may indicate disturbance of Dosha, Dhatu or nutrition and should be correlated with other clinical findings.	

6. Nakha and Nakh Vyadhi

Ayurveda describes disorders involving the nails under the concept of Nakh Vyadhi. These conditions may present with changes in:

- * Nail colour
- * Shape
- * Thickness
- * Texture
- * Strength
- * Attachment
- * Growth

These classical descriptions can be studied alongside modern conditions such as onychomycosis, leukonychia,

koilonychia, onycholysis, paronychia and nail dystrophies.

Ayurvedic significance in one line

“Nakha is considered the Mala of Asthi Dhatu and its appearance and integrity can provide valuable information regarding Asthi Dhatu and overall health.”

Modern Relation of Nails

1. Nail plate

- * Visible, hard, translucent part of the nail.
- * Composed mainly of tightly packed hard keratin.
- * Usually has a slightly convex surface.
- * It protects the underlying tissues of the fingertip.
- * Average growth of fingernails is approximately 3 mm/month.

2. Nail matrix

- * Located beneath the proximal nail fold.
- * It is the germinal part of the nail responsible for production of the nail plate.
- * Damage to the matrix may cause permanent nail deformity.
- * The distal portion of the matrix is visible as the lunula.

3. Lunula

- * Whitish, crescent-shaped area at the proximal part of the nail.
- * Represents the visible portion of the distal nail matrix.
- * Usually most prominent on the thumb.

4. Nail bed

- * Skin directly beneath the nail plate.
- * Extends from the distal margin of the matrix to the hyponychium.
- * Contains numerous blood vessels, giving the nail its characteristic pinkish colour.

5. Proximal Nail Fold

- * Fold of skin that covers and protects the proximal part of the nail matrix.
- * The cuticle/eponychium is associated with this region.

6. Lateral Nail Folds

- * Skin folds present along both sides of the nail.
- * They support and protect the lateral margins of the nail plate.

7. Eponychium (cuticle)

- * Thin layer of keratinized tissue extending from the proximal nail fold onto the nail plate.
- * Forms a protective seal between the nail plate and proximal nail fold.

8. Hyponychium

- * Thickened epidermis beneath the free distal edge of the nail.
- * Acts as a protective barrier against microorganisms and foreign material.

9. Free edge

- * Distal portion of the nail plate that extends beyond the fingertip.
- * It is not attached to the nail bed.

10. Nail grooves

- * Longitudinal depressions between the nail plate and the lateral nail folds.
- * They help guide the growth of the nail plate.

Simple flow

Nail matrix → produces nail plate → nail plate moves distally over nail bed → free edge

Clinical Importance

The nails can provide valuable clues about systemic and local diseases. Changes in colour, shape, thickness, surface, attachment and growth may occur in conditions such as anaemia, clubbing, fungal infections, psoriasis, nutritional deficiencies and systemic disorders.

Nakh Vyadhi in Ayurveda

Nakh Vyadhi - refers to disorders affecting the Nakha (nails). In Ayurveda, nail abnormalities are described in relation to Doṣa, Dhātu, Rakta, and local pathological processes. Since Nakha is considered a Mala of Asthi Dhātu, abnormalities of the nails may also be understood in relation to Asthi Dhātu and its nourishment.

Important Ayurvedic Nail Disorders

A commonly described nail disorder is Kadar, characterized by painful, hard/thickened growth or pathological changes around the nail region. Classical descriptions of nail disorders should be interpreted according to the specific Samhita and context, because terminology and classification can vary between texts.

Other nail-related conditions discussed in Ayurvedic literature may include abnormalities such as

Ayurvedic term

General clinical feature

Kadarī	Hard,
thickened, painful nail-region lesion	
Nakhabheda	
Splitting/cracking of the nails	
Nakhashūla	Pain in
the nail	
Nakhadāha	Burning sensation
involving the nail	
Nakhavarṇa vikṛti	Abnormal
change in nail colour	
Nakhadourbalya	
Weakness/brittleness of nails	

Dosha Involvement

The manifestations can be understood according to predominant Doṣa:

Vāta

- * Dryness and roughness
- * Brittleness

- * Splitting/cracking
- * Pain

Pitta

- * Reddish/yellowish discoloration
- * Burning
- * Inflammation
- * Tenderness

Kapha

- * Thickening
- * Heaviness
- * Excessive hardness
- * Whitish/pale changes

Modern Correlation

The Ayurvedic description of Nakh Vyadhi can be studied comparatively with modern nail disorders such as:

- * Onychomycosis – fungal infection of nail
- * Paronychia – inflammation/infection of nail folds
- * Onycholysis – separation of nail plate from nail bed
- * Koilonychia – spoon-shaped nails
- * Leukonychia – white discoloration
- * Onychorrhexis – longitudinal splitting/ridging
- * Nail psoriasis – pitting, discoloration and dystrophy
- * Clubbing – increased curvature of the nail with bulbous enlargement of the fingertip

Importance of studying Nakh Vyadhi-

Nails are easily accessible structures that can reflect local pathology as well as systemic abnormalities. Therefore, studying Nakh Vyadhi from both Ayurvedic and modern perspectives can help establish correlations between classical descriptions and contemporary clinical findings. For your review article, an important point is to avoid assuming that every modern nail disease has a one-to-one Ayurvedic equivalent. The correlation should be based on similarities in lakṣaṇa (clinical features), pathogenesis and clinical presentation.

CONCLUSION

The study of Nakh Sharir provides an important understanding of the structure, formation, characteristics and clinical significance of nails from the Ayurvedic perspective. Ayurveda considers Nakha as a Mala of Asthi Dhatu, thereby establishing a close relationship between nails and the nourishment and status of Asthi Dhatu. The appearance, strength, colour, texture and other changes in Nakha can provide valuable information regarding the overall health of an individual.

From the modern perspective, the nail is a specialized keratinized structure consisting of the nail plate, nail matrix, nail bed, nail folds, lunula, eponychium and hyponychium. Nails have important protective and functional roles and may also act as valuable clinical indicators of local and systemic diseases.

A comparative study of Ayurvedic concepts of Nakha and Nakh Vyadhi with modern nail anatomy and nail disorders demonstrates several areas of clinical relevance. Although direct one-to-one correlation between Ayurvedic disease entities and modern nail disorders cannot always be established, comparison of their clinical features provides an opportunity for better understanding of nail pathology. Thus, an integrated approach combining the Ayurvedic principles of Nakh Sharir, Dosha-Dhatu concepts and Nakh Vyadhi with modern knowledge of nail anatomy, physiology and pathology can enhance clinical observation and interpretation of nail abnormalities. Further systematic clinical and research studies are required to validate these correlations and develop evidence-based understanding of Nakh Sharir in contemporary healthcare.

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