

A REVIEW ARTICLE ON CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE HUMAN BODY INDICATING DEERGHAYU

[Swati Sharma](#)¹, [Sachin Sharma](#)²

¹PG Scholar, ²Associate Professor

Dept. of Rachana Sharir, Shri Krishna Govt. Ayurvedic College, Kurukshetra, Haryana, India

Corresponding Author: kaushikswati578@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a science that imparts knowledge of life. Our *acharyas* have described *Deerghayu* and *Alpayu* based on the size and shape of external body structures. *Acharya* Charaka gave a beautiful description of *Deerghayu-lakshana* just after the *Namakarnasanskar* of a newly born child. He also explained about the decrease in life span according to yuga. The sign and symptoms of a long-life span are given by him based on characteristic features of different body parts such as *bala*, *Shira*, *lalata*, *netra*, *mukha*, *vaksha*, *bahu* etc. *Acharya Sushruta* also described features of *Dheerga*, *Madhyama* and *Alpayu* based on the physical appearance of a person. The maintenance of these features plays a crucial role in a healthy and long life.

Keywords: *Deerghayu*, *Alpayu*, *bala*, *Shira*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the science of life has always viewed ageing as a graceful phase of life. It recognizes ageing as a naturally occurring (*swabhava*) disease along with hunger, thirst, sleep and death. Every person will pass

through a period when various decaying changes occur. Old age is an undesirable, inevitable phase of human life. The onset of signs and symptoms of ageing is evident at the age of 60, (a stage of old age).

The decline of each organ system appears to occur independently of change in other organ systems and is influenced by diet, environment and personal habits as well as genetic factors. *Acharya charaka* has mentioned human life span in declination with concern to different *Yuga* (Era), i.e., 400 years in *Kurta / Sata Yuga*, 300 years in *Tretayuga*, 200 years in *Dvapara Yuga* and 100 years in *Kaliyuga* (present Era)¹. The *Vaya* is mainly divided into three stages. i.e., *Bala* (early stage of life), *Madhya* (middle stage of life), and *Jirna* or *Vridhdha* (old Age). Thorough structural scientific knowledge of life was recommended by our ancient *acharya*. Various description of the concept of *Aayu* is available in *ayurvedic* classics. *Charaka* has described the features of *Deerghayu* even early in childhood² based on features of different body structures like hair, nails, forehead, eye, ear etc. Our *acharyas* have also focused on the *aahar* and *vihaar* of *Garbhini* during pregnancy for the delivery of a healthy foetus both physically and mentally. Hereby reviewing the characteristic features of body parts indicating a long life span or *Deerghayu*.

DISCUSSION

Life span is the maximum number of years that a human can live. It is the average number of years that a human expects to live. It is fundamentally different from life expectancy. Our *acharyas* have given various theories about the life expectancy of human beings as well as the concept of having a long and healthy life span.

The characteristics features described by *Acharya Charaka* for *Deerghayu* are²:

- **Hairs (*Bala*):** Discrete, soft, sparse, firmly rooted, black
- **Skin (*Twacha*):** Thick and not loose
- **Head (*Shira*):** constitutionally of excellent type, slightly bigger, proportionate with other parts or resemble like an umbrella.
- **Forehead (*Lalita*):** Broad, strong, even having wrinkles, the shape of a half-moon, and firm union with the temporal bone.
- **Ear (*Karna*):** Thick large, even size, having a big ear hole, bend towards the backside.

- **Eye (*Netra*):** Equal in size, fixed look, clear cut divisions of different parts, strong lustrous and beautiful.
- **Eyebrows (*Bhru*):** Slightly hanging downwards, separated equal, compact and large.
- **Nose (*Nasa*):** Straight, capable of taking a deep breath, slightly curved at the tip.
- **Mouth (*Mukha*):** Big in size, straight and having compact teeth.
- **Tongue (*Jihwa*):** Proper length and breadth, smooth, thin and natural colour.
- **Palate (*Talu*):** Smooth, plump, hot in touch and red in colour.
- **Voice (*Swara*):** Profound, not sluggish, sweet having echo, deep tone and steady.
- **Lips (*Oshta*):** Neither thick nor thin, adequate width, capable of covering mouth cavity and red.
- **Jaws (*Hanu*):** Large.
- **Neck (*Greeva*):** Round in shape, not very large.
- **Chest (*Vaksha*):** Broad and plumpy.
- **Clavicle and vertebral columns (*Jatru and Pristhavansha*):** not visible, covered by muscle.
- **Breast (*Stana*):** Having wide space in between them.
- **Flanks (*Parshva*):** Downwards and firm.
- **Buttocks (*Sphik*):** Round firm plump with muscle and neither excessively elevated nor depressed.
- **Thighs (*Uru*):** Tapering downwards round and plumpy.
- **Calf region (*Jhangha*):** Neither excessively plump nor excessively emaciated, resembles that of deer, having well-covered vessels and bones.
- **Ankle (*Gulf*):** Neither excessively plump nor emaciated.
- **Feet (*Pada*):** Having characteristic features, neither plumpy nor emaciated and having the shape of a tortoise.
- **Limbs, Fingers (*Bahu, Sakthi, Anguli*):** Round full and extended.
- **Nails (*Nakha*):** Firm and round, properly elevated, convex like the back of a tortoise.

- **Umbilicus (Nabhi):** Whirled, clockwise and well depressed.
- **Waist (Kati):** Less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the chest in circumference even and plump with muscle.

Some more properties are added by Acharya Vagbhata along with *Charaka*, which includes the colour of tongue, palate, plantar, and palmar surface should be of the copper colour. Eyelashes and *Drish-ti* (Pupil) should be black. Teeth should be unctuous and white, presence of pulsation in heart and temporal region, mild hotness in feet, palate and abdomen, proper anatomy of reproductive and excretory organ³.

Acharya Sharangdhara describes the order of depletion of factors related to the body successively within 10 years i.e. *Bala* (Childhood), *Vridhi* (Growth), *Chavi* (complexion), *Medha* (Intelligence), *Twacha* (Skin), *Drish-ti* (Vision), *Sukra* (Semen), *Prakrama* (Valour), *Buddhi* (Intellect), *Karmendriya* (five motor organs), *Mana* (Mind), *Jeevan* (Life)⁴. *Acharya Sushruta* also described *Deerghayulakshana*: Person having joints, veins and ligaments fully covered with muscles, a compact body structure with muscle mass, all senses must work properly and a perfectly shaped body from toe to head. Disease-free from fertilization upto birth and even after birth person's body and intellectual quality go on increasing day by day with age *Alpayu lakshana* i.e. 25 years – these persons have more congenital malformation and structural deformity like very small fingers, very large penis, depressed ribs and narrow back, unnaturally placed ears and nose, gums are visible during laughing and talking, unstable eyesight⁵.

CONCLUSION

In the above-mentioned review, *Acharyas* talked about the normal anatomical characteristics of healthy and *Deerghayu* individuals. Congenital malformations are surely decided by dominant and recessive traits. For genetic hindrance, *Acharyas* have given the concept of *Atulyagotriya*. In today's era, we are doing pedigree analysis to prevent recessive traits and fertile age given for females to prevent other malformations. Our *Acharyas* described *Garbhini*

Paricharya for pregnant women for obtaining healthy baby and after that, a child should be given *Swarna prashna* or should be vaccinated properly to prevent malnutrition and disease in children. To maintain proper health upto old age, the *aahar-vihar*, of a person must be proper. The last phase of life begins with a gradual declination of functions of physical and mental faculties which gears up with the advancement of age. *Kalaja jara* is nothing but chronological ageing which occurs naturally. The most important causative factor for the ageing process is *Kala*. Other factors include *Desha*, *Aahar Sausthavam* and *Avighata* which are rightly justified in the modern era by extensive research in the form of increased air pollution, smoking, increase caloric intake and stress, generating excessive free radicals eventually hastening the process of ageing. The concept of normal healthy body features indicating a long-life span are given by ancient *acharyas*. These can be maintained by the person who will follow strictly the health care measures like *Dinacharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvrita* and *Swasthavritta*. By doing this, he will be going to attain *Kalamrityu*.

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