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# Kesha Shareera as per Acharya Charaka - A conceptual study

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## ABSTRACT

The main aim of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the health of an individual and treat illness if occurs. As *Samyavasthata* of *Dosha* disturbs and illness occurs, the structures and functions of body alters as *Dosha* influences *Dhatu* accordingly. The study of these structures acts as criteria to understand the health and illness of a person and one among such structure of health or disease is *Kesha*. *Kesha* being one such parameter of health, description about it regarding its formation, characteristics, variation according to different body constitution (*Prakruti*), beneficial and harmful factors for *Kesha*, its maintenance, importance in clinical diagnosis and prognosis of a disease etc. is available in *Ayurveda*. In this article, an attempt is made to understand *Kesha Sharira* and its concepts according to *Charaka Samhita*.

**Key words:** *Kesha, Hair, Prakruti, Swastha, Arishta, Pitruja Bhava, Charaka Samhita.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Kesha* in *Ayurveda* is used for denoting the hair. It is an indicator of health and also has much influence on the psychological confidence of a person. *Kesha* synonyms as per *Amarakosha* are like - *Chikura, Kuntala, Bāla, Kacha, Kesha, Shiroruha*<sup>[1]</sup> etc. According to *Sanskrit* dictionary meaning the word *Kesha* has been used mainly to denote the scalp hair.<sup>[2]</sup>

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Study of the concept of *Kesha Shareera* as per *Charaka Samhita*.
2. Understanding of *Kesha* in different contexts.

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## METHODOLOGY

### Study design

Literary review of *Kesha* in *Charaka Samhita*.

### Source of Information

Information of *Kesha* is collected and compiled from *Charaka Samhita* and classified the information according to different categories like anatomical, healthy and in diseased.

## LITERARY REVIEW

### Structural concept of *Kesha*

*Kesha* considered as a *Parthiva Dravya*<sup>[3]</sup> i.e., it is derivative of the *Prithvi Mahabhuta* and is one among the *Pitruja Bhava*<sup>[4]</sup> (paternal entities) which is obtained from father. Child having black, soft and long hair are among the ideal features mentioned in the contact of *Putreshthi Yagna*.<sup>[5]</sup> *Kesha* (hair) is said to be formed in third month on pregnancy.<sup>[6]</sup> *Kesha* is *Kittabgha* of *Ahara*<sup>[7]</sup> and also *Upadhatu* of *Asthi*.<sup>[8]</sup>

During the description of the *Deerghayu Lakshana* (signs of longevity), it is mentioned that the person having discrete, soft, sparse, oily, deep rooted and black hairs will enjoy a long life.<sup>[9]</sup> The physical

attributes of the hair also vary according to the *Prakruti* (body constitution) and *Sara Lakshana* (constitutional essence) of the person. The person with *Vata Prakruti* will have coarse and small hairs,<sup>[10]</sup> whereas person of *Pitta Prakruti* will have soft, sparse, grey hair followed by early hair fall.<sup>[11]</sup> The person having a constitutional essence of *Meda Dhatu* will have soft and oily hairs on his body.<sup>[12]</sup> Acharya Charaka enumerates *Kesha* are about 29,956 present in the body,<sup>[13]</sup> while explaining *Srotas* inside the body are connected to the root of the hairs.<sup>[14]</sup>

The *Kesha* (hair) and *Nakha* (nail) don't have *Adhishtana* of *Atma*<sup>[15]</sup> and *Indriya*, specifically the *Sparshanendriya*.<sup>[16]</sup> *Dosha* affects *Dhatu* till the activity of *Sparshanendriya* present. Absence of knowledge of any sense *Rom Kesha* indicated that there is absence of *Atma*, *Manas* and *Indriya*. Diseases like *Khalitya* (baldness), *Palitya* (greying of hairs) etc. is the result of *Dosha* affecting *Dhatu* present in *Sparshanendriya Adhishtana* which affects *Kesha* (hair) and *Nakha* (nail). The place where *Kesha* grows is called as *Keshabhumi*<sup>[17]</sup> and any abnormality in *Keshabhumi* will reflect in the health of *Kesha*.<sup>[18]</sup>

### Concept of Kesha (hair) in healthy

Although the *Kesha* doesn't have *Atma*, *Satva* and *Indriya Adhishtana* in *Kesha*, but its health have significant role in social living. Hence, nurturing and maintaining of *Kesha* is also of prime importance. The various *Ahara* (food activity) *Vihara* (physical activity) and *Vichara* (mental activity) mentioned in the context of health of *Kesha*. Such factors which are good for *Kesha* (hair) mentioned by *Charaka* are like *Dhumapana* which prevents hairfall.<sup>[19]</sup> Use of *Anu Taila* regularly in the form of *Nasya* helps for hair growth.<sup>[20]</sup> *Murdhni Taila* (*Shirodhara*, *Shiroabhyanga*, *Shirobasti*, *Shiro Pichu*) strengthens the hair and also helps for its growth and darkening its colour.<sup>[21]</sup> *Madhuka* drug is considered good for the hair growth.<sup>[22]</sup> *Madhura Rasa Ahara* is good for the health of hair.<sup>[23]</sup>

*Krishna Tila* (Black sesame oil) is effective in hair health.<sup>[24]</sup> *Kshara Dravyas* are bad for the health of

*Kesha* (hair).<sup>[25]</sup> Consumption of *Shami* fruit frequently is also considered as bad for the health if *Kesha*.<sup>[26]</sup>

Maintenance of health of *Kesha* is explained while describing *Sadvrutta* (the virtuous conduct) of a person. Cutting and proper dressing of hair, moustache and beard etc. will act as an aphrodisiac, promotes as nutritive and also enhances the beauty and cleanliness of a person.<sup>[27]</sup> *Kesha* should be cut once in every three months.<sup>[28]</sup> One should not strike at the hair tips frequently.<sup>[29]</sup> Presence of *Kesha* in food items is considered as the *Bhojyagata Dosha* (the polluted food).<sup>[30]</sup> Preparation of hair dye is mentioned using drugs like *Loha Churna*, *Shukta Amla* and *Saindhava Lavana* etc.<sup>[31]</sup>

### Pathological consideration of Kesha (hair)

*Acharya Charaka* explained many areas where *Kesha* (hair) has very significant role in understanding both prognosis and diagnosis values. Here we can see the explanation related to *Kesha* (hair) in diagnosis aspect, prognosis aspect and treatment aspect. *Kesha Patana* (hair fall) is a condition of sign in *Asthi Dhatu Kshaya*.<sup>[32]</sup> When *Dosha* affects *Asthi Dhatu*, morphological changes can be seen<sup>[33]</sup> as well as growth of hairs.<sup>[34]</sup> *Kesha Jatilata* (matting of hairs).<sup>[35]</sup> There will be abnormal growth of *Kesha* associated with increased loss of *Kesha* in case of *Rajyakshma*<sup>[36]</sup> and the person also dreams of walking on the heap of *Kesha*.<sup>[37]</sup>

When *Kesha* comes out without pain upon pulling, this condition is considered like that patient is dead<sup>[38]</sup> or he may not survive beyond 6 days.<sup>[39]</sup> If a person pulls out his *Kesha* after fainting and feels weak even after having a good amount of food is going to die soon.<sup>[40]</sup> *Arishta Lakshana* related with *Doota*, it was believed that, if the *Doota* (messenger) touches his own hair before meeting the doctor, the patient would die.<sup>[41]</sup> In certain condition, deep-seated and long standing fever with parting line of *Kesha* is considered as *Asadhya*.<sup>[42]</sup> In death due to poisoning, there will unusual hair fall in the person.<sup>[43]</sup> *Keshada*, *Lomada*, *Lomadveepa* etc. are responsible for the destruction of *Kesha* as they are considered as the seat for *Bahya Malajanya Krimis*<sup>[44]</sup> and *Shonitaja Krimis*.<sup>[45]</sup>

In some of the treatment modalities like, pulling of *Kesha* is advised to recover a patient with *Sanyasa Roga*.<sup>[46]</sup> When *Keshabhumi* (scalp region) is burnt due to *Agni* and *Vayu Mahabhuta* in the body, it leads to *Khalitya* (hair loss) and *Palitya* (greying of hair). Fumigation with human hair is done in treatment of *Arshas*.<sup>[47]</sup> In cases of *Unmada Roga*, *Siravyadha* is done at the junction of *Shankha Pradesha* and *Keshanta* (hair line).<sup>[48]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Study of *Kesha* in detail helps a physician to understand the overall health of a person. *Kesha* is a very important structure in the body, it has significant role in approaching a patient due to its role in health and ill health, and its impact on psychology of a person. *Kesha* (hair) acts as an indicator of *Swastha* and *Roga* and also because of its *Arishta Lakshana* (prognosis) in certain disease conditions. Though the information of *Kesha* is vastly available in *Charaka Samhita*, it is discrete and spread throughout the different chapters.

*Kesha* being studied under different categories like the structural consideration, healthy condition like maintenance good health of hairs, and pathological consideration like diagnosis, treatment and prognosis consideration. In structural aspect of *Kesha*, it mainly involves the general physical attributes like the thickness, enumeration of *Kesha*, the colour etc. depending on the different *Prakruti* (body constitution) and *Sara* (constitutional essence) of a person. The formation of *Kesha* starts in the third month of intrauterine life, and later we find that *Kesha* explained as *Kitta Bhaga* (waste portion) of food as well as an *Updhatu* of *Asthi Dhatu*. *Kesha* is mainly *Prithvi Mahabhuta* in predominance. This relation will certainly help to understand the *Prakruthi* of a person before diagnosing and advising the precise treatment by understanding *Rogi Bala*. This knowledge helps physician to select proper medicines, based on the *Panchabhoutika* predominance of the drug as well as on which particular *Dhatu* physician should concentrate on. It also gives us knowledge that *Atma*, *Satva* & *Indriya* are absent in *Kesha* except at their roots. *Kesha* plays a very important role in the

psychological aspect and social aspect of the person and hence, its maintenance and nourishment is also of equal importance. In explanation of *Dincharya* in *Charaka Samhita*, procedures like, *Dhumapana*, *Nasya* with *Anu Taila*, *Murdhni Taila* (*Shiro Abhyanga*, *Shiro Basti*, *Shirodhara* and *Shiro Pichu*) practices have been mentioned which not only strengthens the hair, but also helps for its growth and darkening its colour. Grooming of hair in regular intervals and their benefits like social influence has also been mentioned. Dying of *Kesha* and its maintenance like which is good and which is bad for hair also been told.

The structure of *Kesha* is also studied in different disease conditions as the *Poorvarupa* and *Roopa* signs in diseases like *Prameha* and *Rajayakshma*.as well as signs of problems with *Dhatu* like *Asthi Dhatu Kshaya* or *Asthi Pradoshaja Vikaras* and in prognostic values in conditions like *Visha*, *Krimi Roga*, *Arishta Lakshana* (prognostic signs of death) etc.

In some of the treatment modalities of diseases like, pulling of *Kesha* is advised to recover a patient with *Sanyasa Roga*, *Dhupna* (fumigation) with human hair in treatment of *Arshas*, *Siravyadha* in cases of *Unmada Roga*, and the reasons for *Khalitya* (hair loss) and *Palitya* (greying of hair) etc. have been mentioned.

## CONCLUSION

*Kesha* is one among important structure of the body where a physician can understand *Prakruti* of a person through which he can decide various treatment plans. Physician can use *Kesha* as diagnostic, prognostic and treatment tool in his clinical practice. Now a day's hair care became a most expensive and socio economical practice, and through the knowledge of *Kesha Shareera* a physician can achieve benefits by utilizing this knowledge and find success in his clinical approach.

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