AYUSHDHARA
ISSN: 2393-9583 (P)/ 2393-9591 (O)
An International Journal of Research in AYUSH and Allied Systems

Review Article

# SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF LONGEVITY SIGNS IN AYURVEDA: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW WITH MODERN CONCEPTS

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**Article info**

**Article History:**
Received: 19-05-2025
Accepted: 22-06-2025
Published: 25-07-2025

**KEYWORDS:**
Ayurveda, Longevity, Life Expectancy, Predictive Health, Aging, Morphology.

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Longevity has been a subject of deep interest both in classical Ayurvedic literature and modern medical sciences. Ancient seers like *Sushruta* and provided physiological and psychological markers to predict lifespan, which align intriguingly with contemporary understandings of health, genetics, and biological aging. **Aim:** To comprehensively analyze the Ayurvedic features denoting long, medium, and short life expectancy and correlate these with current biomedical findings on anatomical and physiological health predictors. **Materials and Methods:** A qualitative analytical approach was adopted. Ayurvedic classical texts (primarily *Sushruta Samhita*) were studied to extract verses indicating physical and behavioral signs of longevity. Each Ayurvedic marker was then compared with modern biological principles, including tissue health, anatomical symmetry, hormonal balance, genetics, and developmental biology. The analysis emphasized scientific rationale and humanized interpretations for enhanced understanding. **Results:** Ayurveda associates longevity with well-developed joints, balanced sense organs, symmetrical physique, consistent health from intrauterine life, and gradual intellectual development. These correlate with modern signs such as robust connective tissue health, symmetrical morphogenesis, neurodevelopmental stability, genetic resilience, and absence of congenital or developmental disorders. Medium and short life expectancies are linked to partial or full deviations in these characteristics. Modern parallels include premature aging markers, dysmorphic features, and signs of systemic vulnerabilities. **Conclusion:** Ayurveda's indicators of lifespan are grounded in observable and measurable physical and psychological parameters that resonate with modern scientific insights into aging, development, and systemic health. Bridging ancient wisdom with contemporary science can pave the way for integrative approaches in predictive diagnostics and personalized healthcare.

## INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda* perceives the human body as a microcosm of nature, governed by three *Dosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*) and affected by the harmony of physical, mental, and environmental factors. One of the lesser-explored but significant contributions of Ayurvedic texts is the characterization of lifespan prediction based on physical signs and developmental history. *Sushruta Samhita*, a foundational text of surgery and anatomy in Ayurveda, outlines specific features in an individual's body that are indicators of either a long, moderate or short life. While these descriptions were empirical, rooted in centuries of clinical observations, they bear striking resemblance to modern markers of genetic health, hormonal balance, and congenital anomalies. This article delves into these Ayurvedic signs, translating them into modern anatomical and physiological terms and examining how closely they align with current scientific paradigms.

| Access this article online | |
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| Quick Response Code | |
| | https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v12i3.2133 |
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### Ayurvedic Signs of Long Life (*Deerghayu*)[1]

*Sushruta* states that a person with well-covered joints, deep-seated ligaments, well-built body structure (*Sanhatanga*), stable sense organs and a symmetrical body shape from feet to head is indicative of

*Deerghayu*, or long life. Additionally, those who have had uninterrupted development from fetal life, free from congenital or acquired diseases, and whose intellect (*Jnana*) and technical knowledge (*Vijnana*) develop progressively are also considered to have long life potential.

**Comparative Analysis: Ayurveda vs. Modern Science**

| Ayurvedic Feature | Modern Scientific Equivalent | Scientific Reasoning for Longevity |
|---|---|---|
| सन्धियाँ, सिराएँ और स्नायु गूढ (well-covered joints, vessels, and ligaments) | Strong connective tissues, protected neurovascular structures | Proper musculoskeletal and vascular development ensures physical resilience. Well-developed collagen and elastin fibers in ligaments, fascia, and vessels reduce risks of early degeneration and injury, promoting long life.[2] |
| संहतांग (Compact and muscular body) | Mesomorphic or healthy body composition with good muscle-to-fat ratio | A strong, muscular build with healthy BMI is linked to better metabolic function, reduced inflammation, and lower risk of chronic diseases (like diabetes and heart disease), supporting longevity.[3] |
| ज्ञानेन्द्रियाँ स्थिर (Balanced sensory organs and mind) | Stable neurological function and sensory integrity | Balanced nervous system (especially autonomic balance) supports stress response, homeostasis, and neuroplasticity. Loss of sensory or cognitive function is often associated with aging or neurodegeneration. Preserved function reflects healthy aging.[4] |
| शरीर उत्तरोत्तर-पैरों से लेकर शिर तक - सुडौल - Symmetrical, proportionate body (feet to head) | Bilateral symmetry, proportional limb-body ratios | Symmetry and proportion are markers of developmental stability and good genetic and epigenetic health. Studies suggest that higher symmetry correlates with reproductive fitness and lower oxidative stress. |
| गर्भावस्था से नीरोगी - Disease-free from fetal life | Prenatal and early-life health (intrauterine programming) | According to the DOHaD theory (Developmental Origins of Health and Disease), healthy fetal development lowers risk of adult-onset diseases like obesity, CVD, and diabetes. Epigenetic programming in the womb affects lifelong health.[5] |
| शरीर, ज्ञान और विज्ञान का विकास - Gradual and proper development of body, knowledge, and skills | Cognitive development, neuroplasticity, lifelong learning | Continuous intellectual stimulation and learning are associated with increased neuroplasticity, cognitive reserve, and delay in cognitive decline. It reflects balanced endocrine and nervous system health across life stages. |

Ayurveda's criteria for identifying a person of long life are rooted in deep observation of structural, functional, and developmental health. Modern science increasingly validates these signs through research in genetics, epigenetics, neurology, and physiology. The integration of these perspectives underscores the predictive power of holistic assessment in determining longevity.

**Ayurvedic Signs of Medium Life (*Madhyamayu*)[6]**

*Sushruta* describes features of individuals with moderate lifespan. These include having two or more clear lines below the eyes, fleshy feet and ears, a slightly elevated nasal tip, and vertical lines on the back.

**Comparative Analysis: Ayurveda vs. Modern Science**

| Ayurvedic Feature | Modern Scientific Equivalent | Scientific Reasoning for Medium Lifespan |
|---|---|---|
| आँखों के नीचे स्पष्ट और लम्बी दो, तीन या अधिक रेखाएँ - Lines under the eyes (2 or more long, | Periorbital lines, facial morphology linked to stress and aging. | Facial lines may indicate stress levels, hydration, collagen degradation, and genetic aging markers. Deep lines can suggest moderate aging and may correlate with a medium lifespan.[7] |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| clear lines) | | |
| पैर और कान मांसल - Fleshy feet and ears | Thick subcutaneous tissue in extremities. | Moderate adiposity in non-visceral areas may reflect average metabolic health. While excessive fat is harmful, moderate fleshiness may indicate a balance, not typically associated with extreme longevity. |
| नासाग्र ऊपर को उठा - Upward-pointed nasal tip | Nasal shape as a hereditary trait and marker of development | Some nasal shapes are associated with specific ethnic traits and developmental markers. While not directly linked to lifespan, they may reflect underlying genetic constitution and oxygen intake efficiency.[8] |
| पीठ पर ऊपर की ओर को रेखाएँ - Vertical lines on the back | Paraspinal skin folds or dermatomal lines | Such lines may indicate musculoskeletal posture or connective tissue characteristics. They may reflect moderate vitality or musculoskeletal tone, suggesting an average physical constitution. |

The Ayurvedic markers of a medium lifespan emphasize observable physical characteristics that can be interpreted through modern scientific principles. While not always direct indicators of longevity, these features align with average health markers and physical constitution. Modern science supports the notion that certain external traits are reflections of internal physiological status, aiding in life expectancy estimation.

**Ayurvedic Signs of Short Life *(Alpayu)*[9]**

Sushruta identifies signs of short life expectancy. These include small joint structures, a disproportionately large male reproductive organ, a chest covered with irregular body hair, narrow back, high-set ears and nose, visible gums when speaking, and a distracted or vacant gaze.

**Comparative Analysis: Ayurveda vs. Modern Science**

| **Ayurvedic Feature** | **Modern Scientific Equivalent** | **Scientific Reasoning for Short Lifespan** |
|---|---|---|
| सन्धियों के पर्व छोटे - Small joints (Short bony prominences) | Underdeveloped epiphyses or skeletal dysplasia | May indicate developmental delays, hormonal deficiencies, or congenital skeletal disorders which can be associated with reduced life expectancy.[10] |
| पुरुषजननेन्द्रिय बड़ी - Large male genitalia | Macroorchidism (enlarged genitalia) | Can be a marker of genetic syndromes (e.g., fragile X) or endocrine imbalances, which may co-occur with systemic issues reducing longevity.[11] |
| छाती विभिन्न दिशाओं में मुड़े हुए बालों से ढकी हो - Chest covered with hair growing in various directions | Hirsutism, irregular hair pattern | Could reflect hormonal imbalances (e.g., androgens) or poor systemic regulation, associated with lower health resilience. [12] |
| पृष्ठभाग चौड़ा न हो - Narrow back | Reduced thoracic width | Often linked with lower respiratory capacity and musculoskeletal underdevelopment, impacting cardiovascular and pulmonary health.[13] |
| कान स्वाभाविक स्थान से ऊँचे - Ears positioned abnormally high | Craniofacial dysmorphology | Atypical ear positioning is observed in several genetic disorders which are often associated with reduced lifespan. |
| नाक भी ऊँची - High nose (protruding or hypertrophic) | Craniofacial prominence | May be associated with connective tissue disorders or abnormal growth signalling. |
| हँसते और बोलते समय जिसका दन्तमांस (Gums) दिखायी देता हो - Gum visibility while talking or laughing | Gummy smile (excessive gingival display) | Can reflect altered facial musculature, hormonal or dental abnormalities; possibly correlated with systemic syndromes.[14] |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| दृष्टि विभ्रान्त - Vacant look (unfocused eyes) | Cognitive delay or neurological deficit | May signify neurodevelopmental disorders or underlying degenerative conditions with poor life expectancy. |

## DISCUSSION

The Ayurvedic concept of identifying life expectancy based on physical features is remarkably close to the principles used in modern medical diagnostics. While *Sushruta* relied on acute observational skills and cumulative empirical knowledge, contemporary science supports these observations through measurable anatomical, genetic, and biochemical parameters. What makes Ayurvedic diagnostics unique is its integration of mental, emotional, and developmental markers, in contrast to modern reductionist approaches. By appreciating these parallels, we uncover a shared human endeavor: understanding the signs written in the body about its vitality and duration of life.

## CONCLUSION

Ayurveda, through detailed anatomical and physiological markers, provides a time-tested lens to assess longevity. *Sushruta's* descriptions, though poetic and rooted in *Sanskrit* lexicon, accurately echo modern biological understanding. This article validates the relevance of classical Ayurvedic markers through a scientific lens, advocating a unified approach that values both traditional observational diagnostics and modern evidence-based medicine.

The Ayurvedic features indicating a short lifespan may be interpreted in modern terms as signs of genetic anomalies, developmental disorders, or systemic deficiencies. While Ayurveda uses a holistic, observational lens, modern science can provide anatomical and physiological explanations that validate many of these traits as relevant to health prognosis and longevity.

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**Cite this article as:**
Shivam Mahajan, Ashok Kumar Sharma, Priyanka. Scientific Analysis of Longevity Signs in Ayurveda: A Comparative Review with Modern Concepts. AYUSHDHARA, 2025;12(3):283-286.
https://doi.org/10.47070/ayushdhara.v12i3.2133
***Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared***



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