



# SHAT KRIYAKALA AND DIAGNOSTIC REASONING IN AYURVEDA: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

The principle of Kriya Kala in Ayurveda is crucial for comprehending the phases of disease development and for identifying the suitable timing for intervention and treatment. This methodology, which can be compared to contemporary insights into disease pathogenesis, is comprehensively detailed by Acharya Susruta in the 21st chapter of Sutrasthana, where he delineates the six stages of Shatkriyakala: Sanchaya, Prakopa, Prasara, Sthansamshraya, Vyaktavastha, and Bhedavastha. Kriya signifies action or treatment, while Kala denotes time or period. Therefore, Shatkriyakala pertains to the 'suitable times for taking action or treatment.' In Ayurveda, the Prayojana, or objective, is twofold: to sustain health in a healthy individual, which is accomplished by adhering to Ritucharya (seasonal routines), Dinacharya (daily routines), and Sadvritta (moral and ethical conduct); and to remedy illness in an afflicted individual through therapeutic interventions. Prior to examining the pathological states of the body, a physician must first grasp the normal functions and structures of the body, grounded in the principles of dosha, dushya, and srotas. Kriya Kala assists the physician in selecting an appropriate treatment strategy by evaluating the condition of the disturbed doshas through their intellect and expertise.

**KEYWORDS:** *Shat kriyakala, Diagnosis, Prognosis.*

## INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, the emphasis is primarily placed on disease prevention rather than merely implementing curative strategies. Sushruta's framework of Shatkriyakala delineates the sequential phases of disease development and proposes preventive actions to avert complications. Timely diagnosis facilitates effective disease management with minimal discomfort during the treatment process. When a physician identifies alterations in the initial phases, such as Sanchaya (Accumulation) and Prakopa (Aggravation), based on the expression of dosha symptoms, they can suggest methods to hinder the disease's progression and intensification. By comprehending Shatkriyakala, a physician is equipped to address weakened areas or organs at an early stage, thus preventing further advancement into Sthanasamshraya (Localization). This expertise also allows the physician to assess the prognosis (Sadhyasadyatva) of the condition.

Kriya Kala is primarily divided into two types

1. Ritu Kriya Kala
2. Vyadhi Kriya Kala

Ritu Kriya Kala is detailed by Vagbhata in the twelfth chapter of Astanga Sangraha, Sutra Sthana. It encompasses three phases: Chaya (Accumulation), Kopa (Aggravation), and Prashama (Pacification). The stages of doshas are affected by the current season. Adhering to the suitable seasonal regimen can restore these doshas to their normal condition. Vyadhi Kriya Kala is outlined by Sushruta and comprises six stages, referred to as Shatkriyakala. In contemporary science, the progression of disease is generally acknowledged in two phases: the identification of the disease and the complications that follow. Conversely, Ayurveda recognizes six stages for any ailment (Shatkriyakala), where the observable symptoms and complications of a disease manifest in the last two stages. Shatkriyakala is the process of understanding the pathogenesis of disease through consecutive stages. Six main stages are described for the successive manifestation of disease:

1. Sanchaya: Gradual accumulation of doshas in their respective seats.
2. Prakopa: Accumulated doshas begin moving to other sites beyond their main location.
3. Prasara: Aggravated doshas leave their original place and spread to other parts of the body through different srotas.
4. Sthanasamshraya: Agitated doshas spread to different areas and become obstructed in certain srotas due to abnormalities, resulting in localization.
5. Vyaktavastha: Clear-cut symptoms of the disease appear.
6. Bhedavastha: Specific signs and symptoms of the disease manifest.

Understanding Shatkriyakala is crucial for comprehending the disease process, making this article significant.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To study the concept of Shatkriyakala.
2. To examine the role of Shatkriyakala in the manifestation of diseases.

This conceptual study will aid in understanding the pathogenesis of diseases in consecutive stages.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Source of data

1. Sushruta Samhita
2. Ashtanga Hridaya
3. Ayurvediya vikrti Vijnana and Roga vijnana
4. Relevant published articles

## OBSERVATION AND RESULT<sup>[4-13]</sup>

- 1. Sanchaya (Stage of accumulation):** The rise of doshas in their designated areas is referred to as Sanchaya. During this phase, individuals develop an aversion to factors that contribute to the increase and a preference for qualities that are contrary. At this stage, mild symptoms are evident, making it highly advantageous to address the individual's condition. Symptoms may include abdominal distension resulting from the buildup of vata dosha, yellowing of the nails, eyes, and urine associated with pitta dosha, and sensations of heaviness and lethargy linked to kapha dosha.

The etiology of Sanchaya can be classified into

1. Kala Swabhava (Natural)
2. Trividha Hetu (Three types of causative factors):
  - a. Pragynaparadha (Misdeeds)
  - b. Asatmendriyarth Samyoga (Improper use of sensory organs)
  - c. Vyapanna Hetu (Inherent cause), which includes seasonal variations.

At this stage, the imbalanced doshas cannot progress to the next phase without treatment. If left untreated, they grow stronger and more pronounced in their further development. During Sanchaya, a patient seeks the opposite guna (Quality) of rasa (Taste). For instance, when kapha reaches Sanchayavastha, the individual will develop a dislike for sweets and will crave the opposite guna of rasa. This serves as a clear indication of the Sanchaya Avastha of specific doshas, signaling the appropriate moment to evaluate the accumulated doshas and implement the necessary treatment plan..<sup>[1-3]</sup>

## 2. Prakopa (Stage of aggregation)

In the Prakopa (Vitiation) stage, the doshas have been accumulating for a prolonged duration, with the causative factors consistently present. This stage arises when the doshas are prepared to migrate but have not yet dispersed from their initial location to other regions. The development of this stage is attributed to the ongoing consumption of inappropriate ahara (Food) and vihara (Regimen). Dosha vriddhi (Increase in biological humors) manifests in a liquid form at their original site.

There are two classifications of Prakopa: 1. Chayapurvaka prakopa: This type of Prakopa occurs after transitioning from the Sanchaya stage. 2. Achayapurvaka prakopa: This type of Prakopa occurs without any prior accumulation. While doshas may become aberrant in Achayapurvaka Prakopa, the resulting damage can be treated.

The diagnosis of the Prakopa stage can be established by observing persistent Chaya Lakshanas (indicators of aggravated biological factors), a craving for opposing gunas (fundamental attributes), and a dislike for similar gunas. As the body becomes increasingly susceptible to Prakopa due to the buildup of doshas, it is crucial to take Sanchayavastha into account before trying to mitigate the adverse effects of Prakopa. Panchakarma, also known as elimination therapy, is employed to address dosha excitation triggered by seasonal influences.

Basti Karma aids in reducing heightened Vata Dosha in the early rainy season. Virechana and Vaman Karma are beneficial for removing the elevated Pitta and Kapha Doshas during the autumn and spring seasons, respectively. Steering clear of particular etiological factors linked to each dosha is a crucial preventive step for Prakopavastha.

## 3. Prasara: Stage of dosha expansion

Prasara, the third stage of Kriyakala, signifies the expansion of doshas throughout the body. The term "Prasara" means to spread. In this stage, the aggravated doshas extend to other parts, organs, and structures of the body. The expanded doshas manifest specific symptoms corresponding to the actions of each dosha:

- Vata Prasara manifests as Vimarga-gamana and Aatopa.
- Pitta Prasara manifests as Osha, Chosha, Paridaha and Dhumayana.
- Kapha Prasara manifests as Arochaka, Avipaka, Angasada, and Chhardi.

## 4. Sthansanshraya: Stage of Dosha-Tissue accumulation

Sthansanshraya represents the stage where doshas aggravate and spread to different parts of the body. This occurs due to the inherent property of Vayu, known as "Desham Vayurgati Matwatvat," which denotes the mobility of Vayu. This mobility serves as the cause of dosha expansion and overflow, leading to their localization in focal points. These focal points might be predisposed due to previous defects or weaknesses at the cellular, tissue, or organ level, known as Khavaigunya. These defects could be primarily genetic or hereditary, or secondarily acquired due to previous exposure to etiological factors. In this stage of Dosha-Dushya Sammurchana, or the amalgamation of doshas and tissues, past diseases or previous weaknesses become apparent. This marks the fourth stage of Kriyakala. The vitiated doshas spread to various parts of the

body, giving rise to different diseases. When this Dosha-Dushya Sammurchana occurs in the Basti Pradesh (Urinary system), it leads to diseases like Ashmari (Renal calculi) and Mutraghata (Urinary obstruction). Similarly, when it occurs in the Guda region (Rectum), it results in diseases like Bhagandara (Fistula-in-ano) and Arsha (Hemorrhoids).

**5. Vyakta** stage, also known as the stage of disease manifestation, clinical features are well produced, and one can easily identify the disease. Diseases fully manifest through their symptoms during this stage. Basic signs and symptoms of diseases become evident, such as increased body temperature in the case of Jwara, excessive watery stool in Atisara, and unusual abdominal enlargement in Udara Roga. Treatment strategies tailored to specific diseases, known as Vyadhi Pratyanika Chikitsa, must be adopted during this stage.

**6. Bheda vastha (Stage of complication):** Bheda marks the final stage of disease progression, during which complications may arise, and the onset of other diseases may occur. Prognosis in this stage is very poor, and untreated conditions may become incurable. This stage is particularly challenging to treat, and complications can significantly impact health, potentially leading to death.

The process of dosha vitiation ideally concludes by the fifth stage. However, if appropriate treatment is not provided after reaching this stage, the dosha may advance to the sixth stage, known as Bheda. This final phase of Kriyakala enables precise diagnosis of the illness and identification of its doshic type. For example, in Kaphaj Jwara, where the Kapha dosha is dominant, this stage verifies the doshic prevalence. This phase is often regarded as particularly difficult to treat and may even be considered incurable. For instance, if an inflammatory condition is not addressed early on, it could lead to the development of an abscess, which may eventually rupture and result in a permanent scar. Likewise, non-inflammatory issues such as pyrexia and diarrhea, if not treated promptly, can result in serious complications.

### Importance of shatkriyakala

1. This concept aids in assessing the progress of the disease.
2. It helps prevent further accumulation of causative factors.
3. Shatkriyakala provides information about disease-causing factors, allowing for preventive measures to be adopted.
4. It ensures accurate management of the disease and aids in planning suitable treatment regimens.
5. Information about Sthanasamshraya can help prevent healthy organs from being affected by the disease.
6. Sadhyasadyatva of the disease can be explored based on the stage of Shatkriyakala (progressive disease stage).
7. The concept of Shatkriyakala assists in understanding the complete pathogenesis of the disease.

**Table: Particular treatment according to shatkriyakala.**

| Sr no. | Stage          | Management                                                                                |
|--------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1      | Sanchay        | Nidan Parivarjana, Suitable Shamana                                                       |
| 2      | Prakop         | Vata-Vatanulomana Pitta- Pitta shamana /Sukhvirechan Kapha Agnideepan, Pachana, Kaphahara |
| 3      | Prasar         | Vata- Basti Pitta-Virechana. KaphaVamana                                                  |
| 4      | Sthansanshray  | Samprapti vighatan                                                                        |
| 5      | Vyakta avastha | Lakshanik and as per chikitsa siddhantas                                                  |
| 6      | Bheda avastha  | Doshpratyanik and Vyadhipratyanik chikitsa                                                |

## DISCUSSION

### Overview of Shatkriyakala and its significance

Shatkriyakala is a core Ayurvedic idea describing how disease develops over time. It is central to Ayurveda's aim of reestablishing balance in the body by correcting disturbances in the humors that arise from unhealthy diets and lifestyles. This sequence begins when improper eating and living habits upset the doshas, a process that parallels the modern concept of the natural history of disease.

### Classical exposition by Sushruta

Sushruta provided a detailed account of Shatkriyakala while discussing abscess formation, identifying six progressive stages of disease development. Some classical sources condense the process into two stages, with Sushruta's sixfold scheme encompassing the initial phases. These early stages correspond to the pre-pathogenesis period in contemporary medicine, when interactions among agents, hosts, and environments set the stage for disease.

### Prevention in the early stages

Primary prevention, which targets the pre-pathogenesis phase, can be achieved through general health-promoting practices or specific protective actions. During the first two stages of Shatkriyakala, doshas accumulate at their usual sites and become disturbed as homeostasis breaks down. Ayurveda advises restoring balance through routine and seasonal regimens to prevent progression.

### Progression to tissue involvement and prodrome

Disease develops when the vitiated doshas combine with dhatus or body tissues. In the third and fourth stages, the accumulated doshas move within the body and localize in areas of lowered resistance, taking root in particular organs or systems and initiating disease. The fourth stage brings prodromal signs, comparable to the presymptomatic phase in modern medicine, when pathological processes are underway but clear symptoms have not yet appeared. Both primary and secondary preventive measures are applicable during these stages.

### Clinical manifestation and secondary prevention

Secondary prevention focuses on early detection and timely treatment to halt disease progression and restore health. By the fifth stage of Kriyakala, overt signs and symptoms are present, matching the clinical phase in the natural history of disease. Diagnosis is made through clinical assessment, and appropriate therapies—either cleansing procedures or palliative care—are instituted.

## Outcome stage and tertiary prevention

The sixth stage, Bheda, denotes either the development of complications if the disease is untreated or the restoration of health. This stage corresponds to the phase of reduced functional capacity in modern frameworks. Tertiary prevention, which aims to limit disability and provide rehabilitation, is the appropriate intervention at this point.

## CONCLUSION

Grasping Shatkriyakala is essential for understanding how diseases evolve and for making accurate diagnoses. A clinician who can recognize and interpret the six stages of dosha disturbance is better equipped to identify and manage illnesses, thereby achieving clinical success as a Bhishak. Familiarity with Shatkriyakala guides the selection of stage-appropriate therapies and informs expectations about disease outcome. Classical authorities warn that postponing treatment beyond the stages described in Shatkriyakala can render conditions difficult or impossible to cure and undermine therapeutic efforts. For these reasons, the Shatkriyakala framework in traditional Ayurvedic texts remains highly important.

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