



Review Article

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CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF SHATAKRIYAKALA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient bunch of knowledge that aims at maintaining the health of a healthy individual and curing the diseased one. This is brought by equalizing *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*. The term *Kriyakala* refers to recognising a disease's progress stage, which helps to determine appropriate measures to correct the imbalance in *Doshas* (biological factors). *Ayurveda* mentioned several concepts for understanding and preventing disease pathogenesis, and *Shatakriyakala* is one of them. It is a compound expression comprised of *Kriya* and *Kala*, where *Kriya* means the choice of treatment (medicine, food, and daily routine) used to improve the disturbance in *Doshas*, and *Kala* refers to the stage of progress of a disease. *Shatakriyakala* is mainly associated with six stages of disease progression and their possible management through *Ayurveda* principles. *Shatakriyakala* not only helps to diagnose diseases in the early stage but also helps to suppress their intensity. *Kriyakala* gives us the knowledge of diagnosis, prognosis, and the level of intervention to prevent disease establishment. A clear understanding of the stages of *Kriyakala* is an essential factor for early diagnosis and prognosis and for adopting appropriate preventing and curative measures to prevent the further establishment of disease & thereby prevent the complications associated with it emphasized in this article.

Keywords: Health, *Ayurveda*, *Kriyakala*, *Vyadhi*, *Dosha*, *Dushy*.

INTRODUCTION

Kriyakala is a unique concept in *Ayurveda* that gives us an idea of the diagnosis and prognosis of a disease. The word meaning of *Kriyakala* refers to treatment modalities that can be applied during the stages of a disease.¹ The Prime factors in disease pathogenesis are *Dosha* and *Dushyas* (Body elements). The vitiated *Doshas* are further developed and evaluated if a person has not undergone the treatment. According to *Ayurveda*, vitiated *dosha* affects the other body elements resulting in disease formation. So, the complete knowledge of *Shatkriyakala* is essential to curing the disease. In modern Science, the disease can be recognized in two stages, the first stage is the detection of the disease, and the second encompasses the complication due to a particular disease. However, *Ayurveda* identifies six stages of any disease (*Shatkriyakala*). Where the visible symptoms of an illness and its complications occupy the last two places.²

Acharya Sushruta explains the concept of *Shatkriyakala*. In *Vranaprashnaadhyaya* where he explains that the *Vyadhi Utapatti* (disease formation) involves *Dosha Dushya Sammurchana* (a conglomeration of *Dosha* and *Dushya*), which exhibits the *Vyadhi Avatha*.³

Concept of *Shatkriyakala*

The term *Kriya* refers to treatment, and *Kala* refers to *Nithyaga* (*Ritu Kala* - seasonal variation) and *Avasthika* (*Vyadhi Kala* - stages of disease manifestation).⁴

Mainly *Kriya Kala* is divided into two types.

1. *Ritu Kriya Kala*.
2. *Vyadhi Kriya kala*.

Ritu Kriya Kala

Vagbhata explains the *Ritu Kriya Kala* in *Ashtanga Samgraha Sutra Sthana* in the 12th chapter.⁵ The equilibrium of the *Dosha* is precarious and later undergoes various changes constantly every day. These daily changes happening in particular *Ritu* have been described as the three stages of *Dosha* as *Chaya*, *Prakopa*, and *Prashama*.⁶

Table 1

Stages	Vata dosha	Pitta dosha	Kapha dosha
Chaya	Grishma	Varsha	Shisira
Kopa	Varsha	Sharad	Vasanta
Prashama	Sharad	Hemanta	Grishma

As the cycle of changes in the *Ritu* goes on naturally, the cycle of changes in the *Dosha* is also a natural event. These changes of the *Dosha* do not produce severe distress to the body, nor do they require any drastic remedial measures. So that the human body will get accustomed to the natural seasonal conditions occurring years after years and abnormalities if *Dosha* will revert to normal automatically, this is also known as *Prakruta Kriyakala*.

Vyadhi Kriya Kala

It represents the abnormal changes in the *Dosha* because of an unwholesome diet and activities. It includes three stages: *Sthana Samshraya*, *Vyakti*, and *Bheda*. These changes are consequential, abnormal, and unacquainted with the human body and so cause severe distress to it. The *Dosha* may not revert to standard harmony, continue to become profound, give rise to diseases, and, if left unchecked, endanger life. Hence this is considered very abnormal, requiring remedial measures at the earliest.

Stage of Kriyakala

Sushruta Sutra sthana Adhyaya 21st: Here, in this context, the word, *Kriyakala* is also called *ShadKriyakala*, which mainly describes the mode and stages of development of diseases in six stages. The vitiated *doshas* show particular *karyas* in six different stages.⁷

Shad-kriyakala are six in numbers; they are as follows-

- *Sanchaya* (Stage of accumulation)
- *Prakopa* (Stage of Provocation)
- *Prasara* (Stage of Propagation)
- *Sthana Samshraya* (Stage of localization)
- *Vyakti* (Stage of manifestation)
- *Bheda* (Stage of differentiation)

Sanchaya (Stage of accumulations)

An increase of *Doshas* in their sites is called *Sanchaya*.⁸ *Vata* undergoes *Sanchaya* in the *Pakwashaya*, which is the chief site; *Pitta* undergoes *Sanchaya* in the *Amashaya*, and *Kapha* undergoes *Sanchaya* in the *Uras*. It is the first Formative or Inceptive phase of the disease, also known as *Samhati Rupa Vriddhi*, in which *doshas* are stated to have accumulated and stagnated in their *Sthana* or place instead of freely circulating as in their normal *Avastha* or state.⁹ In this *sanchayavastha*, the accumulated *dosha* produces vague and ill-defined *lakshanas*, described as follows.¹⁰

Table 2

<i>Vata</i>	<i>Stabdha purna koshtata</i> - Feeling of obstruction and fullness in the abdominal organs
<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Peetavabhasata</i> - Yellowish discolouration of the body <i>Manda Ushmata</i> - low digestive fire or low body temperature
<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Anganam Gaurava</i> - Heaviness of bodily organs <i>Alasya</i> - Lethargy or laziness

Prakopa (Stage OF AGGRAVATION)

In *Prakopa* (vitiation) stage, the accumulation stage has persisted for a long time, and the responsible factors have been continuously present. This stage occurs while the *Dosha* is ready to move from their place to another.¹¹ When *Dosha* is not brought to equilibrium in *Sanchaya Avastha*, the *Dosha* that had previously accumulated and stagnated in its particular location tends to become swollen and excited. *Dalhana* has defined this stage as the melting stage of the Previously excited *doshas*.

This stage has two types one is *Achaya Poorvaka Prakopa* while another is *chaya Poorvaka Prakopa*.¹²

1. *Achaya Poorvaka Prakopa*: - Without accumulation in their principal seats
2. *Chaya Poorvaka Prakopa*: - With accumulation in their chief seats

Dosha Prakopa Lakshanas (Symptoms)¹³

Table 3

<i>Vata prakopa lakshana</i>	<i>Koshta Toda</i> - pricking type of pain in the abdomen <i>Sancharana</i> - Movement of <i>Vata</i> in the <i>Mahasrotasa</i>
<i>Pitta prakopa lakshana</i>	<i>Amlika</i> - Sour eructations <i>Pipasa</i> - Excessive thirst <i>Paridaha</i> - Burning sensation all over the body.
<i>Kapha prakopa lakshana</i>	<i>Annadweshya</i> - Aversion toward food <i>Hridayotkslesha</i> - Heaviness of the chest region and nausea.

Prasara (Stage of spread)

Prasara is a spreading stage in which the causative factors continue, and the *Prakopa* stage has affected the *Doshas*. Now in the *Prasara* stage, the *Doshas* overflow and spread or move to other areas or organs of the body. *Acharya Sushruta* explains this stage by giving a simile of “*Kinvodaka- Pista Samyoga*”. *Kinva*, *Udaka*, and ground rice grains are mixed and kept in a vessel throughout the night, leading to fermentation. This fermentation leads to the spreading of the contents out of the vessel in the same way the aggravated *Doshas* starts spreading from its abode.¹⁴ *Pitta* and *Kapha doshas*, as well as the *dhatu*s and *malas* are inactive substances that can only be increased in quantity but cannot move from one place to another. *Vata dosha*, on the other hand, helps to move *Pitta*, *Kapha*, *Dhatu*s, and *Malas* to other places.¹⁵

The *Prasara* of *dosha* may occur in the following way, which is of 15 types.¹⁶

Table 4

<i>Vata</i>	<i>Vata-Kapha</i>	<i>Vata-Pitta-Kapha</i>
<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Kapha-Pitta</i>	<i>Kapha-Pitta-Rakta</i>
<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Vata-Rakta</i>	<i>Vata-Pitta-Rakta</i>
<i>Rakta</i>	<i>Pitta-Rakta</i>	<i>Vata-Kapha-Rakta</i>
<i>Vata-Pitta</i>	<i>Kapha-Rakta</i>	<i>Vata-Pitta-Kapha-Rakta</i>

Prasavara Avastha Dosha Lakshana¹⁷

Table 5

<i>Vata prasara lakshana</i>	<i>Vimarga gamana</i> - <i>Vata</i> moving in the opposite direction <i>Atopa</i> - gurgling sound in the abdomen
<i>Pitta prakopa lakshana</i>	<i>Osha</i> - a sense of boiling, the rise of body temperature <i>Chosha</i> - excessive thirst <i>Paridaha</i> - burning sensation <i>Dhumayanani</i> - feeling as if fumes are coming out of the body
<i>Kapha prakopa lakshana</i>	<i>Arochaka</i> - anorexia <i>Avipaka</i> - indigestion <i>Angasada</i> - muscle weakness <i>Chardi</i> - vomiting

Sthanasamshraya (Stage of localisation)

Sthana Samshraya means ‘localization’, ‘getting settled in one place. The *Dosha* was moved from site to site during the first three stages. *Sthanasamshraya* (localization), or the settlement of *Doshas* at a particular place, occurs when vitiated *Doshas* are circulating and settle in areas of *Srotovaigunya* (depletion of tissue).¹⁸ This stage continues from the stage of *Prasara avastha*,

wherein the *prakupita doshas* will spread all over the body; once they find *Kha-Vaigunya* in the *srotas*, they invade it, accumulate, and settle there to produce *Vyadhi* or disease.¹⁹ In this stage, all the prodromal symptoms of the disease appear yet to manifest fully. So, this stage is also called the *Poorvarooopa* of diseases and hence forms the most crucial stage for treating any disease.

The site for the localization of the *doshas* giving rise to specific diseases about that site is as follows.²⁰

Table 6

Udara	<i>Gulma</i> <i>Vidradhi</i> <i>Udara Roga</i> <i>Anaha</i> <i>Vibandha</i> <i>Visuchika</i> <i>Atisara</i> <i>Pravahika</i> <i>Vilambika</i>
Basti	<i>Prameha</i> <i>Ashmari</i> <i>Mutraghata</i> <i>Mutrakriccha</i>
Medra	<i>Upadamsha</i> <i>Niruddhaprakarsha</i> <i>Shuka Dosha</i>
Guda	<i>Arshas</i> <i>Bhagandhara</i>
Vrushana	<i>Vridhi</i>
Urdhwajatrugata	<i>Manifests Urdhwajatrugata Vikaras</i>
Twak, Mamsa and Shonitagata	<i>Kshudra roga</i> <i>Kushta</i> <i>Visarpa</i>
Medogata	<i>Granthi</i> <i>Apachi</i> <i>Arbuda</i> <i>Galaganda</i> <i>Alaji</i>
Asthigata	<i>Asthi Vidradhi</i>
Padagata	<i>Shlipada</i> <i>VataShonitha</i> <i>Vatakantak</i>

Vyaktha (Stage of manifestation)

Suppose the causative factors present in *Sthanasamsraya* are not treated and continue. In that case, *Dosha* enters the *Vyakthi* (manifestation) stage, where all the disease symptoms appear, hence called *Rupa Avastha*. The signs and symptoms in this stage are broadly classified into two types.²¹

- **Samanya Lakshanas:** General signs and symptoms produced by the increased *Dosha* may commonly be seen in all diseases.
- **Pratyatma Lakshanas:** Specific or Peculiar signs and symptoms which are seen in any one disease characteristically.

Bheda (Stage of chronicity)

Bedha is the final stage where the progression of the disease reaches an end. Complications from living with a disease may bring about other diseases and finally may lead to death.²² In this stage, the disease is usually diagnosed by its complications; the treatment of both the disease and its complications has to be done. Otherwise, the treatment may not be possible. However, in *Bedha*, the survival rate is generally decreased.

DISCUSSION

Kriyakala gives an opportunity at each stage to halt the disease process by appropriate measures. *Kriyakala* is similar to what has been described as the disease cycle or natural history of disease in modern medicine. The stage of *Sanchaya* and *Prakopa* can be comparable with that of the stage of susceptibility. The *Prasara* and *Sthanasanshraya Avastha*, the vitiated or aggravated *Dosha*, start moving and get settled at a particular organ or organ system. The fifth stage of *Shatkriyakala* is *Vyakti*, where the disease is clinically manifested. The last stage of *shatkriyakala* is *Bheda*, which can be compared with the stage of diminished capacity. This stage may end up with recovery, disability, or death.

CONCLUSION

Helpful for knowing what kind of treatment should be administered in the respective stage of *Dosha*. Hence, the concept of *Shatkriyakala* delineated in classical treatises of *Ayurveda* is of great significance. From the above discussion of the concept of *Kriyakala*, the following conclusion can be derived: The Proper Knowledge of *Shat-Kriyakala* helps in understanding the process of manifestation of various diseases and diagnosing the diseases. The physician capable of differentiating and understanding these six stages of *Dosha* and accurately diagnosing and treating the disease according to *Shatakriyakala* will become a *Bhishak*, i.e., a successful practitioner. The knowledge of *Shatakriyakala* helps know what kind of treatment should be administered in the respective stage of *Dosha*.

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