

Shatkriyakala: A Preventive and Therapeutic Model for Early Disease Intervention in Ayurveda

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Abstract—Ayurveda emphasizes prevention, early diagnosis, and timely intervention in disease management, and the concept of Shatkriyakala forms the cornerstone of this approach. Kriyakala denotes the appropriate time for therapeutic action during the progression of disease. Acharya Sushruta has elaborated this concept in the Sutrasthana, describing six sequential stages of disease development—Sanchaya (Chaya), Prakopa, Prasara, Sthanasamshraya, Vyakti, and Bheda. These stages explain the dynamic interaction of Dosha, Dhatu, Mala, and Srotas, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding etiopathogenesis. Shatkriyakala enables physicians to identify subtle pathological changes before full disease manifestation, thereby facilitating early intervention and prevention of complications. The initial stages—Sanchaya, Prakopa, and Prasara—can be correlated with the pre-pathogenesis phase, while Sthanasamshraya, Vyakti, and Bheda correspond to established pathogenesis. This concept can also be aligned with modern preventive medicine, wherein primary prevention can be applied in early stages, secondary prevention during localization of disease, and tertiary prevention in fully manifested and complicated stages. Thus, Shatkriyakala not only guides diagnosis and treatment but also strengthens the preventive and promotive aspects of healthcare. The present article highlights the classical Ayurvedic perspective along with its relevance to modern concepts of disease prevention, underscoring its significance in holistic and timely disease management.

Keywords — Shatkriyakala, Disease progression, Dosha, Ayurveda, Prevention.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Prevention is better than cure” has always been a fundamental principle of health science and forms the cornerstone of Ayurveda. Maintenance of health through a balanced and timely diet, adequate sleep, regulated physical activity, moderation in sexual

conduct, control over stress and emotions, observance of natural urges, and adherence to Dinacharya (daily regimen) and Ritucharya (seasonal regimen) plays a vital role in preventing a wide spectrum of diseases. This represents one dimension of disease prevention. The other, equally important dimension is the early identification of disease in its incipient or subclinical stage, before complete manifestation occurs.

In Ayurveda, disease manifestation is not viewed as an abrupt event but as a gradual, sequential process that begins with exposure to etiological factors (Nidana) and culminates in the full establishment of disease. The fundamental elements involved in this pathological process are Dosha and Dushya. Since disease originates from the vitiation of Doshas, understanding their status—whether in the stage of accumulation (Sanchaya), aggravation (Prakopa), or further progression—is essential for timely and effective intervention.

The systematic understanding of disease progression was comprehensively described in Ayurveda through the concept of Kriyakala, first elaborated by Acharya Sushruta. Kriyakala represents the specific time period or stage at which appropriate therapeutic action (Chikitsa) can be initiated to prevent further progression of disease. The term is derived from Kriya (action or treatment) and Kala (time), thus signifying the “right time for intervention” or Chikitsa Avasara Kala.

The concept of Shatkriyakala explains six sequential stages in the pathogenesis of disease: Sanchaya (accumulation of Dosha), Prakopa (aggravation), Prasara (spread), Sthanasamshraya (localization), Vyakti (clinical manifestation), and Bheda (complications or differentiation). From Sanchaya to Prasara, the stages primarily represent Dosha

violation, while from Sthanasamshraya onwards, disease-specific pathology becomes evident. Recognizing these stages enables the physician to understand the stepwise development of morbidity and adopt suitable preventive or curative measures accordingly.

At the early stages, simple measures such as avoidance of causative factors, lifestyle modifications, and Dosha-pacifying diet and regimen can arrest disease progression. In later stages, Shamana (palliative) and Shodhana (purificatory) therapies are employed based on the severity and chronicity of the condition. Thus, Shatkriyakala not only aids in early diagnosis but also provides valuable insight into prognosis, therapeutic planning, and the level of intervention required to prevent complications.

Therefore, the concept of Shatkriyakala serves as a unique and holistic framework in Ayurveda that bridges preventive and curative medicine, emphasizing early interception of disease and reinforcing the importance of timely, stage-wise management for maintaining health and preventing disease progression.

II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To understand the concept of Shatkriyakala.
- To understand the importance of Shatkriyakala.
- To understand the role of Shatkriyakala in the creation and Prevention of disorders.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

- Review of Literature regarding Shatkriyakala is collected from Sushruta Samhita in the 21st chapter of Sutra sthana.
- Review articles
- Various Research papers and related Journals.
- ❖ Importance of Shat kriyakala:
 - It gives us the knowledge of diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention level.
 - It gives information about the time of treatment in the process of disease manifestation and prevents the establishment of disease.

- These stages give us an idea regarding the state of the disease in the body, and it guides us when to intervene and where to intervene.
- The understanding about Hetu sevana through various Avasthas of Kriyakala helps in preventing indulgence of Hetu sevana.
- The appropriate therapeutic options can be planned by considering concept of Shatkriyakala.
- The complications of diseases prevented since diagnosis and treatment acquired at early stage of disease progression.
- The use of unwanted therapy can impart some side effects thus actual knowledge of Avastha by concept of Shatkriyakala helps to prevent prevalence of such side effects.
- The knowledge of Sadhyasadyatva can be acquired through the concept of Shatkriyakala.
- Ayurveda emphasizes prevention than treatment and Shatkriyakala support this concept.

Classification: Kriyakala is divided into Ritu kriyakala and Vyadhi kriyakala.

• Ritu kriyakala:

The natural changes occur to Dosha according to the season. The Ritu kriyakala is explained by Acharya Vagbhata, Charaka and Susruta. In Grishma Ritu, owing to the nature of Ritu and Aharadi gunas which are identical to the qualities of Vata, will result in Vatachaya. Since the season is hot, which is antagonistic to the Sita property of Vata, Prakopa of Vata does not happen. It undergoes Prakopa in Varsha and become pacified in Sarath. In Varsha Ritu, due to Amla vipaka of Jala and Aharadi guna, Pittachaya occurs. But as the season is Sita, it does not attain the Prakopa stage.

In contrast, it undergoes Prakopa in Sarath and becomes pacified in Hemantha. Similarly, in Sisir Ritu, Kapha chaya occurs due to Snigdha and Sita guna. Even though Deha and Kala favour the increase of Kapha by similar properties, it does not attain Prakopa due to its solid nature. But it attains Kopa in Vasantha and gets pacified in Grishma Ritu. These three stages of Doshas happen due to the influence of changes occurring in the season. If a person adopts the existing Ritu – Ritucharya (Rules of seasonal living), Doshas will be brought back to the normal stage.

- Vyadhi kriyakala:

Sequential progression of a disease. The Vyadhi kriyakala is explained in 6 stages. This is known as Shat kriyakala.

1. Sanchaya - Stage of accumulation
2. Prakopa - Stage of vitiation
3. Prasara - Stage of dissemination
4. Sthanasamsraya - Stage of localization
5. Vyakti - Stage of clinical symptoms
6. Bheda - Stage of complication

It can be otherwise classified based on the criteria for treatment as -

- Dosha kriyakala including Sanchaya, Prakopa and Prasara.
- Vyadhi kriyakala including Sthana samsraya, Vyakti and Bheda.

Table 1: *Shatakriyakala* and their sub-division:

S. No.	Stages of <i>Shatakriyakala</i>	Clinical classification
1	<i>Sanchaya</i>	Subclinical stages
2	<i>Prakopa</i>	
3	<i>Prasara</i>	
4	<i>Sthanasamsraya</i>	Clinical stages
5	<i>Vyakti</i>	
6	<i>Bheda</i>	

1. Sanchaya (Stage of Accumulations):

The increase of Doshas in their own sites is called Sanchaya and Produces a dislike for things which causes of increase and liking for things of opposite qualities in this stage mild symptoms are seen. It is very beneficial to cure the Person is this stage. The symptoms are this stage are abdominal bulging due to accumulation of vata dosha, yellowness of nails, eyes, and urine due to Pitta, and feeling of heaviness and Laziness due to kapha dosha.

Table 3: Dosha Prakopa Karanas:

- Vata Prakopa Karanas:

<i>Aharajana</i>	By taking excessive <i>Katu, Tikta, Kashaya, Ruksha, Laghu, Sheet</i> , and dry <i>Ahar dravyas</i> . And by doing <i>Anasana, Adhyasana</i> and <i>Vishamasana</i> .
<i>Viharjanya</i>	<i>Ativyayama, Aptarpan, Bhagna, Praptana, jagrana, vegadharana</i> .
<i>Kalajana</i>	Vat <i>Prakopa</i> in the rainy season, in the evening, in old age, and at the end of the digestion of food.

The etiology of Sanchaya can be classified into (1) Kala swabhava (natural) (2) Trividha Hetu (Three types of causative factors) i.e. Pragynaparadha (misleads), Asatmendriyarthe Samyoga (improper uses of Sensory organs), and vyapanna hetu (inherent cause). This includes seasonal variation.

These deranged Doshas are rendered in this stage they are not able to move into the next stage. If they are neglected and not treated they became stronger and more intensive in the course of their next developments. In Sanchaya; Patient Wants the Opposite guna (quality) of Rasa (Taste) for example, an intake of sweets when kapha gets sanchayavastha the Person will have aversion to sweets and want to consume the opposite guna (quality) of Rasa (Taste). That is a Proper indication of Sanchaya Avastha of Particular doshas, And this is a Proper time to assess the accumulated doshas and take the Proper line of treatment.

Table 2: *Dosha* and their Chaya, Kopa & Prashama:

<i>Dosha</i>	<i>Chaya</i>	<i>Kopa</i>	<i>Prashama</i>
<i>Vata</i>	<i>Grishma</i>	<i>Varsha</i>	<i>Sharat</i>
<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Varsha</i>	<i>Sharat</i>	<i>Hemant</i>
<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Sisira</i>	<i>Vasanta</i>	<i>Grishma</i>

2. Prakopa (Stage of aggravation):

Prakopa (aggravation) is the 2nd stage of the Shatkriyakala. In this stage, the Dosha go on accumulating further in their own sites. This stage has two types - one is Sanchaya Prakopa another is Achaya Prakop. Dalhana has defined this stage as the melting stage of the Previously excited *doshas*. In this stage, the previously accumulated *doshas* get excited and aggravated though they remain within their own sites. This stage has two types one is *Chaya Prakopa* while another is *Achaya Prakopa*.

• Pitta Prakopa Karanas:

<i>Aharajanya</i>	Excessive use of <i>Katu, Amla, Lavan, ushna, Tikshna guna Ahara dravyas</i> . Fish, goat meat, curd, <i>Madhya</i> , etc are <i>Provok Pitta</i> .
<i>Viharjanya</i>	<i>Krodha, soka, Bhaya, Suryasantapa</i> etc.
<i>Kalajanya</i>	In the hot season, during the digestion of food, midday, midnight, and middle age. Generally, <i>Pitta</i> The provocation is in <i>sharat kala</i>

• Kapha Prakopa Karanas:

<i>Aharajanya</i>	Excessive use of <i>Madhura, Amla, Lavana, ushna, Snigdha, guru Ahara dravyas</i> .
<i>Viharjanya</i>	<i>Diwaswapna, Avyayama, Atisantarpana, Adhyasana</i>
<i>Kalajanya</i>	Naturally <i>Kapha Provocated</i> in <i>Vasant ritu</i> , early in the morning, immediately after meals and in childhood

3. Prasara (Stage of Spreading):

Aggravated Doshas leave their original place and Spread to the other Parts of the body through different srotas. Dosha also moves to different places with the help of *vayu*, either alone or in combination with other Dosha which leads to 15 types of Prasara stages –

- (1) Vata Prasara (2) Pitta Prasara (3) Kapha Prasara (4) Rakta Prasara (5) Vata Pitta Prasara (6) Vat kapha Prasara (7) Vata Rakta Prasara (8) Pitta kapha Prasara (9) Pitta Rakta Prasara (10) Kapha Rakta Prasara (11) Vata Pitta Kapha Prasara (12) Pitta Kapha Rakta Prasara. (13) Vata Pitta Kapha Prasara (14) Vata Kapha Rakta Prasara. (15) Vata Pitta Kapha Rakta Prasara.

Table 4: Symptoms of Tridosha Prasara stage:

<i>Dosha</i>	<i>Prasara lakshanas</i>
<i>Vata</i>	<i>Vimargagamana</i> - regurgitation, <i>Atopa</i> - flatulence and gurgling sounds
<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Osh</i> - Sense of boiling <i>Paridaha</i> - burning sense <i>Chose</i> - Squeezing sense
<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Aruchi</i> - Anorexia <i>Chardi</i> - Vomiting <i>Angasada</i> - inactiveness of organs

4. Sthansanshraya (Stage of localization):

In this stage, the aggravated Dosha, starts to localise to any part of the body and manifest the specific diseases Pertaining to that Part. At this stage the process of interaction between morbid elements and tissues takes place, and the availability of the weak or defective site is essential for the localization of morbid. The doshas in Prasara avastha, circulating through- out the body, get obstructed in the srotas due to *sroto vaigunyua*. This *Srotovaigunya* leads to *Doshdushya Sammurchana* and in this stage, all the Prodromal Symptoms of the disease appear. So this stage is called *Poorvaroop*a of the disease, because of *Dosh-dushya Sammurchana*.

5. Vyakta (Stage of manifestation):

Dalhana has called this stage a stage of manifestation of disease. In this stage, Clinical features are well Produced and one can easily identify the disease. The manifestation of diseases is fully manifested by their symptoms.

6. Bheda (Stage of differentiation):

This is the last stage in which disease can be diagnosed correctly and its Doshaja type can be decided. It is also considered a complicatory stage. In this stage, diseases became *chirakari* (chronic) or *asadhya* (incurable).

Table 5: Symptoms of diseases and related *Doshas* in progressive stages of diseases:

S. No.	Stages of <i>Shatkriyakala</i>	<i>Vata Lakshana</i>	<i>Pitta Lakshana</i>	<i>Kapha Lakshana</i>
1	<i>Sanchaya</i>	Abdomen trouble	Altered thermostat of body	Heaviness and <i>Alasya</i>
2	<i>Prakopa</i>	<i>Toda</i>	<i>Pipasa</i> and <i>Paridaha</i>	<i>Annadwesh</i> a and <i>Hridyotkledascha</i>

3	<i>Prasara</i>	<i>Atopa</i>	<i>Dhoomayanani and Paridaha</i>	<i>Arochaka and Angasada</i>
4	<i>Sthanasamsraya</i>	Inflammation and pain	Metabolic disturbances	<i>Charidi</i>
5	<i>Vyakti</i>	Stiffness	<i>Visarpa</i>	<i>Arbud</i>
6	<i>Bheda</i>	<i>Vataj Jwara</i>	Bursting of swelling	<i>Kaphaj Jwara</i>

Table 6: Particular Treatment according to *Shatkriyakala*:

Stage	Therapeutic Measures
1. <i>Sanchaya</i>	<i>Nidan Parivarjana, Suitable Shamana</i>
2. <i>Prakopa</i>	<i>Vata - Vatanulomana</i> <i>Pitta - Pitta samana / Sukh Virechan</i> <i>Kapha - Agnideepan, Pachana, Kaphahara</i>
3. <i>Prasara</i>	<i>Vata - Vasti</i> <i>Pitta -Virechana Kapha -Vamana</i>
4. <i>Sthansansrya</i>	<i>Samprapti veghatana</i>
5. <i>Vyakti</i>	<i>Lakshanik and as per chikitsa siddhantas</i>
6. <i>Bheda</i>	<i>Doshpratyanik and vyadhipratyanik chikitsa.</i>

IV. DISCUSSION

The natural history of disease and the Ayurvedic concept of Shatkriyakala can be effectively correlated, as both describe disease progression as a sequential and predictable process. In Ayurveda, disease manifestation is explained through six stages of Kriyakala—Sanchaya, Prakopa, Prasara, Sthana Sanshraya, Vyakti, and Bheda—which parallel the two major phases of the natural history of disease described in modern medicine, namely pre-pathogenesis and pathogenesis.

The stages of Sanchaya, Prakopa, and Prasara correspond to the pre-pathogenesis phase, during which etiological factors initiate doshic imbalance, but the disease is not yet clinically established. In these early stages, the intensity of morbidity is mild, symptoms are vague or subclinical, and the disease remains reversible. During Sanchaya, doshas begin to accumulate; in Prakopa, they become aggravated; and in Prasara, the vitiated doshas spread throughout the body via srotas. If appropriate interventions are adopted at these stages, disease progression can be effectively arrested.

The stages of Sthana Sanshraya, Vyakti, and Bheda correspond to the pathogenesis phase of disease. In Sthana Sanshraya, the migrating doshas localize at susceptible sites, leading to dosha-dushya sammurchana and the appearance of poorvarupa (prodromal symptoms). This stage holds great diagnostic value, as early identification can prevent

further progression. Vyakti represents the stage of fully expressed clinical signs and symptoms, comparable to the clinical stage of disease in modern medicine. In this stage, treatment is planned based on the assessment of dosha-dushya involvement, srotas affected, and the strength (bala) of doshas and the patient. Bheda, the final stage, denotes either the development of complications or chronicity if untreated, or recovery if proper therapeutic measures are implemented.

The concept of preventive levels in modern medicine - primordial, primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention - can also be well aligned with Shatkriyakala. Primordial prevention is best applied during Sanchaya, where lifestyle and dietary modifications prevent doshic accumulation. Primary prevention is relevant in Prakopa and Prasara, aiming to suppress aggravated doshas before localization. Secondary prevention aligns with Sthana Sanshraya, focusing on early diagnosis and prompt treatment. Tertiary prevention corresponds to Vyakti and Bheda, where efforts are directed toward preventing complications, disability, and recurrence.

Ayurveda emphasizes Dinacharya and Ritucharya as fundamental preventive measures to maintain doshic balance and prevent disease initiation. Disease, according to Ayurveda, is the result of Dosha-Dushya samyoga; however, before this union occurs, doshas must undergo vitiation. This initial vitiation is evident in the early stages of Kriyakala.

Failure to recognize and manage these stages allows the deranged doshas to gain strength, leading not only to disease progression but also to the development of Nidanarthakara Rogas (secondary or precipitated diseases).

Thus, a comprehensive understanding of Shatkriyakala enables early recognition of disease processes, timely intervention, and effective prevention. Early diagnosis reduces disease burden, treatment complexity, duration, and cost, making healthcare more efficient and patient-friendly. Control of doshas in their initial stages prevents their progression to advanced stages, reinforcing the pivotal role of Shatkriyakala in both disease prevention and clinical management.

V. CONCLUSION

Shatkriyakala is a distinctive and fundamental concept of Ayurveda that provides a comprehensive understanding of the sequential progression of disease. It enables the physician to identify pathological changes at an early stage and arrest disease progression, thereby preventing complications. The six stages — Sanchaya, Prakopa, Prasara, Sthanasamsraya, Vyakti, and Bheda—offer a systematic framework for early diagnosis, accurate assessment of vitiated Doshas, and timely therapeutic intervention. Knowledge of Kriyakala assists in avoiding Hetusevana, planning appropriate Shodhana and Shamana therapies, and emphasizing the role of daily regimen and lifestyle modifications in disease management.

The understanding of Kriyakala also aids in assessing Sadhyasadyata (prognosis), guiding the physician in selecting rational treatment strategies based on the stage and severity of disease. As emphasized by Acharya Sushruta, a physician who diagnoses and treats diseases according to Shatkriyakala becomes more effective and successful in clinical practice. Furthermore, correlating the Ayurvedic concept of pathogenesis with modern preventive medicine may open new avenues for research and strengthen early preventive and therapeutic approaches. Thus, Shatkriyakala not only supports disease cure but also strongly advocates prevention, making it highly relevant in contemporary healthcare.

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