
**STUDY OF SHATKRIYAKALA IN THE VIEW OF KRIYA SHARIR – A
LITERARY REVIEW**

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Doi: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.7077>**ABSTRACT****Background**

Ayurveda describes health as a state of equilibrium among Dosha, Dhatu, Mala and Agni, with proper functioning of Manas and Indriya. Disturbance of this physiological equilibrium initiates a gradual process of pathological transformation. The Ayurvedic concept of Kriyakala provides a systematic understanding of this transition from physiological balance to disease manifestation. Acharya Sushruta described six progressive stages of disease development, collectively known as Shatkriyakala: Sanchaya, Prakopa, Prasara, Sthanasamshraya, Vyakti and Bheda. The concept is particularly relevant to Kriya Sharir because it explains how functional disturbance of Dosha, Agni, Srotas and Dhatu progresses before the appearance of recognizable clinical disease.

Aim

To critically study the concept of Shatkriyakala from the perspective of Kriya Sharir and to explore its physiological, pathological, preventive and clinical significance.

Materials and Methods

A literary review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts including Sushruta Samhita, Charaka Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya, along with their classical commentaries. Relevant contemporary Ayurvedic research articles and literature concerning Shatkriyakala, pathogenesis, homeostasis and early disease detection were also reviewed. The collected

information was critically analysed and conceptually interpreted from the perspective of Kriya Sharir.

Results

Shatkriyakala describes a sequential progression beginning with accumulation of Dosha in their natural sites and progressing through aggravation, dissemination, localization, clinical manifestation and differentiation/complication. The first three stages predominantly represent functional and potentially reversible disturbances, whereas Sthanasamshraya represents localization associated with Khavaigunya and Purvarupa. Vyakti represents clinically recognizable disease, while Bheda represents further progression, complication and chronicity. The concept provides important opportunities for early diagnosis, prevention and timely therapeutic intervention.

Conclusion

Shatkriyakala can be understood as an Ayurvedic dynamic model of disease progression based on alterations in physiological functions. From the Kriya Sharir perspective, it establishes a continuum between Swastha Avastha, Dosha Vaishamya, Samprapti and Vyadhi. Understanding these stages may facilitate early recognition of functional disturbances and support preventive and personalized approaches to disease management.

KEYWORDS: Shatkriyakala; Kriya Sharir; Dosha; Agni; Dhatu; Srotas; Khavaigunya; Samprapti; Sanchaya; Prakopa; Prasara; Sthanasamshraya; Vyakti; Bheda.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda considers the human body as a dynamic functional system in which Dosha, Dhatu, Mala and Agni continuously interact to maintain physiological equilibrium. The classical definition of health emphasizes equilibrium of Dosha, Agni, Dhatu and Mala along with the pleasant state of Atma, Indriya and Manas. Thus, health is not merely the absence of disease but the maintenance of an integrated physiological state.

The fundamental objective of Ayurveda is expressed as:

“स्वस्थस्य स्वास्थ्य रक्षणम् आतुरस्य विकार प्रशमनं च”

The first objective emphasizes preservation of health, whereas the second emphasizes management of disease.

Disease, according to Ayurveda, generally does not appear suddenly. It develops progressively through a sequence of functional and structural changes. This gradual evolution is described by the concept of Kriyakala.

The term Kriyakala is composed of two words:

- Kriya – action, therapeutic intervention or corrective measure.
- Kala – appropriate time or stage.

Therefore, Kriyakala can be understood as the appropriate stage at which an intervention should be undertaken to interrupt the progression of disease. Contemporary literature also interprets Kriyakala as recognition of the stages of disease progression and the corresponding opportunity for therapeutic intervention.

Acharya Sushruta described six stages of disease progression in Sutra Sthana, Chapter 21. These are:

1. Sanchaya
2. Prakopa
3. Prasara
4. Sthanasamshraya
5. Vyakti
6. Bheda

The classical summary is:

“सञ्चयं च प्रकोपं च प्रसरं स्थानसंश्रयम्

व्यक्तिं भेदं च यो वेत्ति दोषाणां स भवेद्विष्णुः॥”

— Sushruta Samhita, Sutra Sthana 21/36

Meaning: The physician who understands accumulation, aggravation, dissemination, localization, manifestation and differentiation/complication of Dosha is considered a competent physician.

From the viewpoint of Kriya Sharir, Shatkriyakala is particularly important because the early stages primarily concern alterations in physiological functioning before the disease becomes fully expressed. It therefore provides a conceptual bridge between normal physiology and pathology.

2. Aim and Objectives

Aim

To study the concept of Shatkriyakala in the view of Kriya Sharir and evaluate its significance in understanding the progression of disease.

Objectives

1. To study the classical concept of Kriyakala.
2. To describe the six stages of Shatkriyakala.
3. To understand the role of Dosha, Agni, Dhatu and Srotas in different stages.
4. To interpret Shatkriyakala from the perspective of Kriya Sharir.
5. To understand the relationship between physiological imbalance and disease manifestation.
6. To explore the preventive and diagnostic importance of early Kriyakala.
7. To establish a conceptual correlation between Shatkriyakala and contemporary understanding of disease progression.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present work is a literary review.

Primary sources

Classical Ayurvedic texts were consulted, particularly:

- Sushruta Samhita
- Charaka Samhita
- Ashtanga Hridaya

Relevant classical commentaries were considered for interpretation.

Secondary sources

Published research articles concerning:

- Shatkriyakala
- Kriyakala
- Dosha physiology
- Homeostasis
- Disease pathogenesis
- Early diagnosis
- Preventive medicine

were reviewed from available academic literature.

The collected material was systematically arranged under the following headings:

Normal physiology → Dosha imbalance → Shatkriyakala → Samprapti → Clinical manifestation → Complication.

The concept was then analyzed specifically from the perspective of Kriya Sharir.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Concept of Kriyakala

Sushruta Samhita explains the importance of Kriyakala as a component of clinical understanding. In the discussion of disease and treatment, Sushruta states that the physician should understand the appropriate time for therapeutic action. □

A particularly important principle is:

“शीते शीतप्रतीकारमुष्णे चोष्णनिवारणम्।

कृत्वा कुर्यात् क्रियां प्राप्तां क्रियाकालं न हापयेत्॥”

This emphasizes that therapeutic measures should be applied according to the condition and appropriate time, without missing the therapeutic window. □

Thus, Kriyakala is not simply a description of disease stages; it is a decision-making framework for timely intervention.

4.2 Shatkriyakala

The six stages are:

1. Sanchaya| Accumulation| Dosha accumulation in own sites
2. Prakopa| Aggravation| Increased intensity of Dosha
3. Prasara| Dissemination| Dosha leave their sites and circulate
4. Sthanasamshraya| Localization| Dosha lodge at susceptible site
5. Vyakti| Manifestation| Disease becomes clinically evident
6. Bheda| Differentiation/complication| Advanced disease and complications

The six stages are consistently identified in classical and contemporary reviews of Shatkriyakala.

4.3 First Kriyakala – Sanchaya

Definition

Sanchaya means accumulation. In this stage, Dosha gradually increase in their respective natural sites.

Sushruta describes:

“एतानि खलु दोषस्थानानि एषु सञ्चीयन्ते दोषाः...”

The accumulated Dosha produce characteristic functional symptoms, marking the first Kriyakala.

Dosha-wise understanding

Dosha| Main site| Functional indication

Vata| Pakvashaya| Stiffness/fullness and altered movement

Pitta| Grahani/Amashaya region| Heat/burning tendency

Kapha| Uras/Amashaya region| Heaviness and sluggishness

Kriya Sharir interpretation

From the Kriya Sharir perspective, Sanchaya represents the earliest functional deviation from physiological equilibrium.

There may not yet be a recognizable disease. However:

- Dosha quantity increases.
- Dosha-specific functions become altered.
- Agni may begin to change.
- Normal homeostatic mechanisms are challenged.
- The individual may experience subtle nonspecific symptoms.

Therefore, Sanchaya can be considered an early functional warning stage.

At this stage, intervention can potentially prevent progression.

4.4 Second Kriyakala – Prakopa

Prakopa means aggravation or intensified disturbance.

When causative factors continue, accumulated Dosha become further aggravated.

Sushruta describes the symptoms of this stage and identifies it as the second Kriyakala. □

Kriya Sharir interpretation

At the Prakopa stage:

Hetu → Dosha accumulation → increased Dosha activity → functional disturbance

The quantitative increase of Dosha is accompanied by increased functional expression.

For example:

- Excessive Vata → increased abnormal movement
- Excessive Pitta → increased heat/metabolic activity
- Excessive Kapha → increased heaviness, stability and sluggishness

From a physiological perspective, this stage may be considered a state in which the body's adaptive mechanisms are increasingly challenged.

Therapeutic importance

The physician should identify the dominant Dosha and remove causative factors.

Nidana Parivarjana is particularly important at this stage.

4.5 Third Kriyakala – Prasara

Prasara means spreading or dissemination.

Once Dosha become sufficiently aggravated, they move beyond their original sites.

Sushruta gives an elaborate description of Dosha dissemination and explains that Vata plays an important role in movement because of its characteristic mobility.

The classical description states:

“एवं प्रकुपितानां प्रसरतां वायोर्विमार्गगमन...”

Sushruta identifies this as the third Kriyakala.

Kriya Sharir interpretation

Prasara can be understood as a stage of systemic functional disturbance.

The Dosha are no longer confined to their original sites. They circulate through the body and interact with:

- Rasa
- Rakta
- Dhatu
- Srotas
- Agni
- susceptible tissues

This makes the disease process increasingly systemic.

Importance of Vata

Vata has the property of movement (Gati). Hence, aggravated Dosha may be carried to different regions through physiological pathways.

This highlights the importance of Vata in the dynamics of Samprapti.

4.6 Fourth Kriyakala – Sthanasamshraya

Sthanasamshraya means localization of Dosha at a susceptible site.

After dissemination, Dosha become lodged in a particular tissue or anatomical/functional location where Khavaigunya exists.

Sushruta describes various disease presentations according to the location where the Dosha become established and states that the appearance of Purvarupa represents the fourth Kriyakala.

Important concept

Dosha + Dushya + Khavaigunya → Sthanasamshraya

This is one of the most important stages from the perspective of Kriya Sharir.

Role of Khavaigunya

Khavaigunya may be understood as a weakness or susceptibility in a particular physiological or structural pathway.

Possible contributing factors include:

- impaired tissue function,
- abnormal Srotas function,
- previous injury,
- nutritional deficiency,
- chronic stress,
- impaired Agni,
- genetic or constitutional susceptibility.

Kriya Sharir interpretation

At Sthanasamshraya, a generalized functional disturbance begins to acquire organ/tissue specificity.

Thus:

General Dosha imbalance → systemic spread → tissue-specific localization

This explains why the same Dosha imbalance may produce different diseases in different individuals.

4.7 Fifth Kriyakala – Vyakti

Vyakti means manifestation.

At this stage, the disease becomes sufficiently developed to show recognizable signs and symptoms.

Sushruta states:

“अत ऊर्ध्वं व्याधेर्दर्शनं वक्ष्यामः...”

and identifies the manifestation of recognizable disease features as the fifth Kriyakala. □

Kriya Sharir interpretation

At Vyakti:

- functional disturbance becomes clinically evident,
- specific organ systems become affected,
- signs and symptoms become recognizable,
- diagnosis becomes easier,

- disease-specific treatment becomes necessary.

The transition can therefore be represented as:

Functional disturbance → localization → Purvarupa → Rupa → Vyadhi

Vyakti is therefore comparable conceptually to the stage at which disease becomes clinically apparent.

4.8 Sixth Kriyakala – Bheda

Bheda represents further differentiation, advanced disease, complications and chronic progression.

Sushruta describes the stage after disease has become established and indicates that persistent disease may become difficult or impossible to manage if appropriate intervention is not undertaken. □

Kriya Sharir interpretation

At this stage:

- Dosha-Dushya interaction becomes established.
- Tissue function may be significantly impaired.
- Structural changes may develop.
- Disease may become chronic.
- Complications may occur.
- Prognosis may become unfavorable.

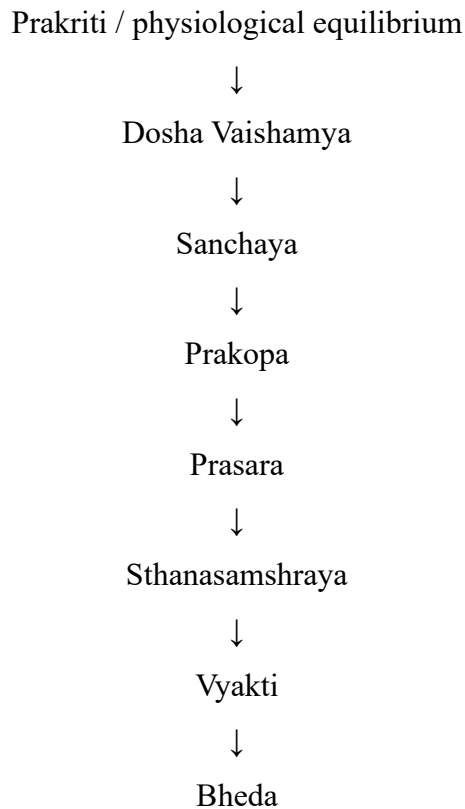
Thus, Bheda represents the stage where the disease has progressed considerably beyond its initial functional disturbance.

5. Shatkriyakala from the Perspective of Kriya Sharir

Kriya Sharir primarily deals with normal physiological functioning. However, understanding normal physiology is essential for understanding pathological deviation.

Shatkriyakala demonstrates this transition.

Conceptual sequence



This can be interpreted as a continuum from functional disturbance to clinically recognizable disease.

6. Role of Dosha in Shatkriyakala

Dosha are dynamic functional principles.

Vata

Main functions include movement, transmission, coordination and regulation.

Disturbance may influence:

- nervous regulation,
- movement,
- circulation,
- elimination,
- sensory-motor functions.

Pitta

Pitta is associated with:

- digestion,
- metabolism,
- transformation,
- thermogenesis,
- visual and biochemical functions.

Kapha

Kapha contributes to:

- stability,
- lubrication,
- cohesion,
- nourishment,
- structural support.

When Dosha remain balanced, physiological functions are maintained. When they become aggravated and progressively interact with Dushya, disease develops.

7. Role of Agni in Shatkriyakala

Agni is a fundamental concept of Kriya Sharir.

Normal Agni supports:

- digestion,
- metabolism,
- transformation of nutrients,
- tissue nourishment,
- maintenance of physiological equilibrium.

Disturbed Agni may contribute to abnormal metabolism and formation of Ama, which may participate in the progression of disease.

Conceptually:

Agni Vaishamya → improper transformation → Dosha/Dushya disturbance → Srotodushti → Samprapti

Therefore, assessment of Agni should be considered while understanding the early stages of Shatkriyakala.

8. Role of Srotas

Srotas provide pathways for transportation and physiological exchange.

The progression of Shatkriyakala can be understood in relation to Srotas:

1. Sanchaya

Initial functional disturbance.

2. Prakopa

Increasing abnormality in Dosha-related activity.

3. Prasara

Movement of aggravated Dosha through body pathways.

4. Sthanasamshraya

Localization at susceptible tissue or Srotas.

5. Vyakti

Disease becomes clinically apparent.

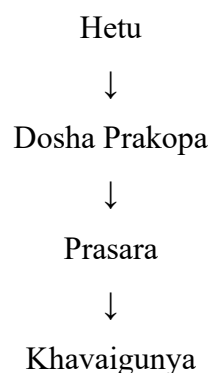
6. Bheda

Advanced dysfunction and complications.

Thus, Srotas are important in understanding the movement and localization of Dosha.

9. Relationship between Dosha, Dushya and Khavaigunya

A simplified representation is:



Dosha-Dushya Sammurchana



Sthanasamshraya



Purvarupa



Vyakti



Bheda

The concept of Khavaigunya explains why disease does not necessarily develop uniformly throughout the body despite systemic Dosha disturbance.

10. Shatkriyakala and Homeostasis

Modern physiology recognizes homeostasis as the ability of the body to maintain relatively stable internal conditions despite continuous external and internal changes.

From a conceptual perspective, Shatkriyakala may be viewed as a progressive model:

Ayurveda| Functional interpretation

Prakriti/Swastha| Physiological equilibrium

Sanchaya| Early deviation

Prakopa| Increasing functional disturbance

Prasara| Systemic dissemination

Sthanasamshraya| Tissue/organ susceptibility

Vyakti| Clinical disease

Bheda| Advanced disease/complication

This should be regarded as a conceptual comparison rather than a direct one-to-one equivalence between Ayurvedic and modern biomedical terminology. Literature has explored Shatkriyakala in relation to homeostasis and pathogenesis, while emphasizing the Ayurvedic framework of Dosha and disease progression.

11. Preventive Significance

One of the most important contributions of Shatkriyakala is that it emphasizes early intervention.

Sushruta states:

“सञ्चयेऽपहृता दोषा लभन्ते नोत्तरा गतीः।

ते तूत्तरासु गतिषु भवन्ति बलवत्तराः॥”

This means that if aggravated/accumulated Dosha are removed at the stage of Sanchaya, they do not progress to subsequent stages; with progression into later stages, they become increasingly stronger.

This principle is highly relevant to preventive medicine.

Therefore:

Early identification → early intervention → interruption of Samprapti → prevention of disease

This is one of the strongest practical applications of Shatkriyakala.

12. Clinical Importance of Shatkriyakala

Understanding Shatkriyakala can assist the physician in:

1. Identifying early functional disturbances.
2. Recognizing Dosha-specific symptoms.
3. Preventing progression of disease.
4. Selecting appropriate therapeutic measures.
5. Assessing disease stage.
6. Understanding prognosis.
7. Identifying the importance of Khavaigunya.
8. Planning individualized treatment.
9. Understanding chronicity and complications.
10. Integrating preventive and therapeutic approaches.

Contemporary Ayurvedic literature similarly emphasizes Shatkriyakala as a framework for early diagnosis, disease prevention and timely treatment. □

13. Kriya Sharir Perspective: Functional to Structural Continuum

A major conceptual interpretation of this review is that Shatkriyakala demonstrates the progression:

Functional disturbance → physiological dysregulation → localization → clinical manifestation → structural/complicated disease

This is particularly relevant to Kriya Sharir because it demonstrates that pathology should be understood as a disturbance of normal physiological functions rather than as an isolated event.

The following model may therefore be proposed:

“समत्वं स्वास्थ्यस्य आधारः, वैषम्यं व्याधेः प्रारम्भः।”

In conceptual terms, maintenance of equilibrium is the foundation of health, while progressive functional disequilibrium initiates disease.

14. DISCUSSION

Shatkriyakala represents one of Ayurveda's systematic approaches to understanding the temporal evolution of disease. Sushruta's description identifies six stages, beginning with Dosha accumulation and culminating in disease differentiation and complications. □

The uniqueness of this concept lies in its emphasis on preclinical stages.

Modern clinical diagnosis frequently becomes easier after disease-specific signs appear. In contrast, Shatkriyakala provides a framework for identifying disease development before complete manifestation.

From the Kriya Sharir perspective, the first three stages may be interpreted predominantly as progressive disturbances in physiological function, while Sthanasamshraya represents an important transition toward tissue-specific pathology.

The concept also highlights the importance of:

- Dosha equilibrium,
- Agni,
- Dhatu,
- Srotas,
- Khavaigunya,
- Dosha-Dushya Sammurchana,
- Samprapti.

Recent literature continues to examine Shatkriyakala as a framework for understanding disease progression and early intervention.

However, correlations with modern biomedical concepts should be made carefully. Shatkriyakala is fundamentally rooted in the Ayurvedic explanatory framework of Dosha, Dushya, Srotas and Samprapti and should not simply be equated with modern pathological stages.

15. LIMITATIONS

1. The present study is a literary review rather than a clinical or experimental study.
2. Interpretation of classical Ayurvedic concepts may vary according to different commentaries.
3. Direct equivalence between Ayurvedic terminology and modern biomedical terminology cannot always be established.
4. Further clinical studies are required to validate the predictive value of early Kriyakala assessment.
5. Objective physiological biomarkers corresponding to individual Kriyakala stages require further investigation.

16. CONCLUSION

Shatkriyakala is a dynamic Ayurvedic model describing the progressive transformation from Dosha imbalance to clinically manifest disease.

From the perspective of Kriya Sharir, the six stages can be understood as a continuum:

Sanchaya → Prakopa → Prasara → Sthanasamshraya → Vyakti → Bheda

The concept begins with subtle functional disturbances and progressively develops into localized pathology, recognizable disease and advanced complications.

Its greatest importance lies in early recognition and timely intervention. The earlier the pathological process is identified, the greater the possibility of preventing progression.

The classical statement:

“सञ्चयं च प्रकोपं च प्रसरं स्थानसंश्रयम्।

व्यक्तिं भेदं च यो वेत्ति दोषाणां स भवेद्विषक्॥”

summarizes the importance of understanding disease as a process rather than merely a final clinical entity.

Thus, Shatkriyakala provides an important conceptual bridge between Kriya Sharir, Vikriti Vigyana, Nidana and Chikitsa, and its study may contribute to the Ayurvedic approach of predictive, preventive and individualized healthcare.

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