



Review Article

## SANCHAYA STAGE OF SHAT KRIYAKALA AND ITS RELEVANCE IN EARLY FUNCTIONAL IMBALANCE: A MODERN PHYSIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda defines health as a state of equilibrium among *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*, along with the harmonious functioning of the mind, sensory organs, and soul. Disease arises when this balance is disturbed due to improper diet, lifestyle, seasonal variations, and behavioural factors. The concept of *Shat Kriyakala* (six stages of disease manifestation) provides a systematic framework explaining the gradual progression of disease from subtle functional imbalance to fully manifested pathology. These six stages- *Sanchaya* (accumulation), *Prakopa* (aggravation), *Prasara* (spread), *Sthanasamsraya* (localization), *Vyakti* (clinical manifestation), and *Bheda* (complication/prognosis)- highlight distinct therapeutic windows for timely intervention. This article explores both *Vyadhi Kriyakala* (pathological progression) and *Ritu Kriyakala* (seasonal physiological variations), emphasizing the preventive dimension of Ayurveda. Special focus is given to the *Sanchaya* stage, where early *Doshic* accumulation corresponds to mild functional disturbances such as impaired digestion, metabolic slowdown, hepatic stress, and altered gut motility from a modern physiological perspective. At this reversible stage, interventions including *Nidana Parivarjana* (elimination of causative factors), *Langhana*, *Deepana-Pachana*, *Ritucharya*, and *Dinacharya* can effectively restore homeostasis. By correlating Ayurvedic principles with modern concepts of homeostatic imbalance, prodromal phases, and preventive healthcare models, this paper demonstrates that *Shat Kriyakala* serves as a predictive and preventive clinical tool. Integrating this classical framework with contemporary biomedical understanding may enhance early diagnosis, individualized management, and holistic disease prevention.

### INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, health is defined as a state of equilibrium among *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*, along with the proper functioning and well-being of the soul, sense organs, and mind.<sup>[1]</sup> Any disturbance in these fundamental components leads to the development of disease. The concept of homeostasis in Ayurveda is primarily maintained through the balance of the three *Doshas*- *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. Unhealthy dietary habits and improper lifestyle practices can disturb this balance, which subsequently affects the *Dhatu*s and

ultimately results in disease manifestation. Ayurveda explains that disease does not occur suddenly but progresses gradually through a series of stages, described under the concept of *Shat Kriyakala*. The term *Kriyakala* combines *Kriya* (treatment) and *Kala* (time), indicating the appropriate timing for therapeutic intervention during disease progression. This unique concept, also known as *Chikitsavasara Kala*, elaborates both the stages of disease development and the ideal opportunities for treatment at each stage.<sup>[2]</sup> *Shat Kriyakala* are *Sanchaya*, *Prakopa*, *Prasara*, *Sthana samshraya*, *Vyakti* and *Bheda*

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical Ayurvedic texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya* were used as primary sources to understand the concept, features, and role of *Sanchaya* in disease progression, along with commentaries and *Ayurvediya Shabdakosha*

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for terminological clarity. Secondary sources included standard modern physiology textbooks and published research articles. A comprehensive literature review was conducted using databases such as PubMed and Google Scholar to collect relevant information on *Doshic* accumulation and early disease indicators. The gathered data were systematically analyzed and thematically organized to correlate Ayurvedic concepts with modern physiological ideas such as homeostasis, subclinical changes, and early functional disturbances prior to structural pathology.

**Kriyakala**

*Kriyakala* is broadly classified into two types: one related to the stages of disease progression, termed *Vyadhikriyakala (Vikrtikriyakala)*, and the other associated with the normal physiological fluctuations of *Doshas*, known as *Praktakriyakala (Rtukriyakala)*. In this context, the word *Kriya* signifies treatment or therapeutic action, while *Kala* denotes time.<sup>[3]</sup>

**Ritukriyakala**

*Ritu Kriyakala* refers to the cyclical changes in *dosha* activity that occur with seasonal variations. As

the seasons change, the *Doshas* undergo specific patterns of accumulation, aggravation, and eventual pacification, following a natural and repetitive cycle.<sup>[4]</sup>

**1) Chaya**

In this stage, the *Dosha* gradually accumulates in its own natural site. And the body tends to develop an aversion toward factors that promote further accumulation, while showing a preference for substances and activities that possess opposing qualities.

**2) Kopa**

At this stage, the *Dosha* begins to spread beyond its original location, leading to more pronounced signs of aggravation. If timely intervention is not undertaken, this phase may advance to the development of clear disease manifestations.

**3) Prashama**

In this stage, the *Doshas* return to their respective sites and regain a state of balance, preventing the manifestation of disease. As the *Doshas* normalize, health is maintained.

**Table 1: Seasonal *Dosha* Imbalance and Preventive Therapies<sup>[5]</sup>**

| Season ( <i>Ritu</i> )         | <i>Dosha</i> Predominance        | Recommended Therapy & Preventive Benefit   |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Spring ( <i>Vasanta Ritu</i> ) | <i>Kapha</i> tends to build up   | <i>Vaman</i> – Expels excess <i>Kapha</i> . When performed in <i>Vasanta Ritu</i> , it acts as a prophylactic measure and helps prevent future <i>Kaphaj Vyadhis</i> . |
| Autumn ( <i>Sharad Ritu</i> )  | <i>Pitta</i> tends to accumulate | <i>Virechan</i> – Eliminates excess <i>Pitta</i> . When done in <i>Sharad Ritu</i> , it serves as a preventive measure against future <i>Pittaj Vyadhis</i> .          |
| Monsoon ( <i>Varsha Ritu</i> ) | <i>Vata</i> tends to increase    | <i>Basti</i> – Pacifies excess <i>Vata</i> . Undergoing <i>Basti</i> in <i>Varsha Ritu</i> helps protect against <i>Vata Vyadhis</i> in the future.                    |

**Shatkriyakala**

**Table 2: Stages of *Shatkriyakala*<sup>[6]</sup>**

| <i>Shatkriyakala</i>  | Stages                |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Sanchaya</i>       | Stage of accumulation |
| <i>Prakopa</i>        | Stage of aggravation  |
| <i>Prashama</i>       | Stage of spread       |
| <i>Sthanasamsraya</i> | Stage of localization |
| <i>Vyakti</i>         | Stage of presentation |
| <i>Bhedam</i>         | Stage of prognosis    |

***Sanchaya* – Stage of Accumulation**

This stage represents the earliest pathological change in the *Doshas* and marks the beginning of disease management. During *Sañcaya* (accumulation), *Doshas* collect in their respective sites without yet becoming aggravated, setting the stage for the next phase.

***Prakopa* (Stage of Aggravation)**

*Prakopa* is the stage of aggravation and represents the second opportunity for therapeutic intervention. In this phase, the *Doshas* become further vitiated within their own sites. It is more intense than the previous stage.

**Table 3: Lakshanas of Prakopa** [7]

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Vata Prakopa</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Kostatoda</i> (pricking pain in GIT)</li> <li>• <i>Doshasancharana</i> (movement of <i>Doshas</i> in GIT)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Pitta Prakopa</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Amlika</i> (sour belching)</li> <li>• <i>Pipasa</i> (thirst)</li> <li>• <i>Paridaha</i> (burning sensation)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Kapha Prakopa</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Annadwesa</i> (aversion towards food)</li> <li>• <i>Hrudayotkleda</i> (nausea)</li> </ul>                              |

Hemadri classifies *Prakopa* into two types: *Prakriti Sama Samaveta*, where symptoms align with the natural qualities of the aggravated *Dosha*, and *Vikriti Vishama Samaveta*, where the manifestations differ from or oppose the *Dosha's* inherent nature. [8]

### Prasara (Stage of Spread)

*Prasara* is the third stage of *Kriyakala* and denotes the phase of spread. In this stage, aggravated *Doshas* become more active and move away from their original sites, spreading to other parts of the body or areas that are susceptible to disease. Ayurveda describes fifteen types of *Prasara*. [9]

1. *Vata Prasara*
2. *Pitta Prasara*

3. *Kapha Prasara*
4. *Rakta Prasara*
5. *Vata Pitta Prasara*
6. *Vata Kapha Prasara*
7. *Pitta Kapha Prasara*
8. *Vata Rakta Prasara*
9. *Vata Pitta Kapha Prasara*
10. *Pitta Rakta Prasara*
11. *Kapha Rakta Prasara*
12. *Vata Pitta Rakta Prasara*
13. *Vata Kapha Rakta Prasara*
14. *Pitta Kapha Rakta Prasara*
15. *Vata Pitta Kapha Rakta Prasara*

**Table 4: Lakshanas of Prasara** [10]

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>Vata Prasara</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vimargagamana Atopa</i> (fullness of abdomen)</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Pitta Prasara</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Osha</i> (increased body temperature)</li> <li>• <i>Chosha Paridaha</i> (burning sensation)</li> <li>• <i>Dumayana</i> (like warm breath)</li> </ul>           |
| <i>Kapha Prasara</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Arocaka</i> (anorexia)</li> <li>• <i>Avipaka</i> (indigestion)</li> <li>• <i>Angasada</i> (lassitude, lethargy)</li> <li>• <i>Chardi</i> (vomiting)</li> </ul> |

### Sthanasamsraya (Stage of Localization)

*Sthanasamsraya* is the fourth stage of *Kriyakala*, where aggravated *Doshas* localize in a specific tissue or organ due to obstruction or defects in the *Srotas*. This stage is marked by the appearance of prodromal symptoms. [11]

- In abdomen– *Gulma, Vidradhi, Udararoga, Anaha, Visuchika, Atisara, Agnimandya*.
- In *Basti*– *Prameha, kidney stone, Mutraghat, Mutradosha* and other related diseases.
- In *Vrushana* – *Vrushanagata vruddhi*
- In *Shishna*– *Niruddhaprakash, Upadansha, Shukra dosha*.
- In *Gudamarga*– *Bhagandara* and *Arsha*
- In *Urdhwajatru*– *Urdhwajatrugata vyadhi*
- In *Twacha*– *Mamsa– Rakta– Kshudraroga, Kushta, Visarpa*
- In *Medadhatu*– *Granthi, Apachi, Arbuda, Galaganda, Alaji*

- In *Asthi*– *Vidradhi, Asthi majja shoth, Anushayi pitika*
- In *pada*– *Shleepada, Vatashonita, Vatakantaka*
- In All body– *Jwara* and diseases of all body affecting all systems. [12]

### Vyakti (Stage of Presentation)

*Vyakti* is the fifth stage of *Kriyakala* and represents the phase in which the disease becomes fully manifest. During this stage, all the characteristic signs and symptoms of the disorder are clearly expressed. This stage signifies the definite manifestation and confirmation of the illness. [13]

### Bhedam (Stage of Prognosis)

*Bheda* represents the final stage of *Kriyakala* and marks a decisive turning point in the course of the disease. The rupture of abscesses and the formation of ulcers signify the sixth stage in the progression of a disease. At this stage, therapeutic attention is primarily directed toward correcting the deep-seated imbalance of the *Doshas*. [14]

**Sanchaya Stage and its Applied Physiology**

*Sanchaya* is the first stage of *Kriyakala*. The term “*Sanchaya*” literally means accumulation. In the context of *Shat kriyakala*, it refers to the buildup of doshas in their respective natural sites. During this phase, the *Doshas* increase in quantity but remain confined to their own locations without spreading. This condition is described as *Samhati Rupa Vriddhi*, meaning an increase without mobility. Because the causative factors (*Nidana*) are not sufficiently strong at this stage, the aggravated *Doshas* remain in a relatively solid or stable (immobile) form within their original seats. However, when the *Doshas* continue to increase and reach the stage of *Vilayana Rupa* (liquefaction), they begin to move from their primary sites to other parts of the body. For such progression to occur, the

influence of strong and persistent etiological factors (*Nidana Kara*) is necessary.<sup>[15]</sup>

The etiology of *Sanchaya* can be classified into

- i) *Kala Swabhava* (natural)- It includes the seasonal and diurnal variations.
- ii) *Trividha Hetu* (three types of causative factors)
  - a) *Prajnaparadha* (misleading): Mistakes or errors in judgment and actions that lead to the accumulation of *Doshas*.
  - b) *Asatmendriyārtha Samyoga* (improper use of sensory organs): Incorrect utilization or overuse of sensory organs that contribute to *Dosha* accumulation.
  - c) *Parinam* (season): Inherent or intrinsic factors that cause *Dosha* accumulation, including changes in seasons, day-night cycles, dietary and lifestyle habits.

**Table 5: Clinical Features of *Sanchaya* Stage**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Vata Sanchaya</b>  | <i>Stabhakosta</i> (abdominal blockage)<br><i>Poorna Kosta</i> (fullness of stomach)   |
| <b>Pitta Sanchaya</b> | <i>Peetavabhasata</i> (yellowish discoloration)<br><i>Mandoshmatha</i> (low digestion) |
| <b>Kapha Sanchaya</b> | <i>Anga Gourava</i> (heaviness of the body)<br><i>Alasya</i> (laziness)                |

During the *Sanchaya* stage of *Vata*, the *Vata dosha* begins to accumulate in its natural site, particularly in the colon and lower abdomen, without yet spreading. *Acharya Sushruta* identifies early symptoms like *Sthabhakosta* (abdominal blockage) and *Poorna Kosta* (feeling of fullness) as signs of *Vata* imbalance. From a modern physiological perspective, *Sthabhakosta* (abdominal blockage), reflects impaired intestinal motility or partial bowel obstruction, where the normal peristaltic movement is slowed or irregular. It can lead to constipation, abdominal discomfort, and the sensation of blockage in the gut. *Poorna Kosta* (fullness of stomach) corresponds to delayed gastric emptying, bloating, or gas accumulation, often resulting from sluggish gut motility and inefficient digestion. It indicates early functional gastrointestinal disturbance caused by excessive *Vata*.<sup>[16]</sup> Together, these symptoms signal the early functional disruption of the gastrointestinal tract due to *Vata* accumulation. Recognizing them allows for timely interventions, such as dietary regulation, lifestyle adjustments, and *Vata*-pacifying therapies, to prevent progression to more severe gastrointestinal disorders.

In the *Sanchaya* stage of *Pitta*, the *Pitta dosha* begins to accumulate in its natural site, often in the *Agni* (digestive fire) and liver-related tissues, without spreading yet. *Acharya Sushruta* describes early symptoms such as *Peetavabhasata* (yellowish discoloration) and *Mandoshmatha* (reduced digestion)

as indicators of *Pitta* imbalance.<sup>[17]</sup> From a modern physiological perspective *Peetavabhasata* (yellowish discoloration) reflects early hepatic or biliary stress, where the liver’s processing of bilirubin or other pigments begins to slow, leading to mild jaundice. It signals subtle metabolic or liver dysfunction before overt disease appears. *Mandoshmatha* (low digestion) This corresponds to reduced digestive efficiency due to decreased enzyme activity, or slower gut motility, resulting in poor breakdown and assimilation of nutrients. It reflects early gastrointestinal dysregulation associated with *Pitta* accumulation in the digestive system.

During the *Sanchaya* stage of *Kapha*, the *Kapha dosha* begins to accumulate in its natural sites, particularly in the chest, head, and upper digestive tract, without yet spreading. *Acharya Sushruta* identifies early symptoms like *Anga Gourava* (heaviness of the body) and *Alasya* (laziness) as indicators of *Kapha* imbalance.<sup>[18]</sup> From a modern physiological perspective *Anga Gourava* (heaviness of the body) reflects a state of reduced metabolic activity and fluid retention, where tissues may feel sluggish due to slower circulation, edema, or fat accumulation. It corresponds to early metabolic slowdown and the body’s decreased responsiveness. *Alasya* (laziness) is associated with low energy expenditure, fatigue, or decreased neuromuscular activation, often arising from slowed metabolism and excess fluid or fat deposition. It indicates early physical and mental

lethargy caused by *Kapha* accumulation. Together, these symptoms signal the initial functional slowdown of the body and mind due to *Kapha* vitiation. Early recognition allows interventions such as light exercise, stimulating diet, and *Kapha*-pacifying therapies to restore balance before more serious disorders develop.

In modern physiological terms, the *Sanchaya* stage of *Shat Kriyakala* corresponds to the early phase of functional imbalance, where homeostatic systems begin to show subtle disturbances but structural damage is not yet present. During this stage, the body's regulatory mechanisms such as digestive function, metabolism, hepatic activity, and neuromuscular coordination start to operate sub optimally. For example, *Vata* accumulation may manifest as slowed gut motility and constipation, *Pitta* accumulation as mild hepatic stress or impaired digestion, and *Kapha* accumulation as reduced metabolic rate, fluid retention, and low energy. These early functional changes act as warning signs, indicating that the body is under stress and may progress to overt disease if the underlying imbalance is not corrected. Recognizing these early physiological shifts allows timely lifestyle or therapeutic interventions to restore balance and prevent disease progression.

#### **Bridging Ancient Wisdom and Modern Prevention: Managing Early Imbalances**

The *Sanchaya* stage of *Kriyakala*, marked by early accumulation of *Doshas* and subtle functional disturbances, offers a crucial window for preventive intervention. Ayurveda emphasizes *Nidana Parivarjana* (removal of causative factors), *Langhana* (light or restricted diet), *Deepana-Pachana* (correction of digestive fire), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), and *Dinacharya* (daily lifestyle regulation) to restore balance before disease manifests. In modern physiological terms, these strategies translate into risk factor elimination, caloric moderation, metabolic optimization, seasonal adaptation, and circadian rhythm regulation. Complementary preventive measures include dietary modification, regular exercise, stress management, early screening, and anti-inflammatory nutrition to support digestive health, metabolism, and systemic resilience. Together, these Ayurvedic and modern approaches provide a holistic framework to correct early functional imbalances, strengthen the body's adaptive capacity, and prevent progression to more severe disease stages.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The concept of *Shat Kriyakala* represents one of the most profound preventive frameworks described in *Sushruta Samhita* and other classical Ayurvedic treatises. It systematically explains how disease evolves from subtle physiological imbalance to

fully manifested pathology. Unlike many modern diagnostic approaches that primarily identify disease after symptom presentation, *Shat Kriyakala* emphasizes predictive awareness and timely intervention. This layered understanding of disease progression highlights Ayurveda's strong preventive orientation. The six stages- *Sanchaya*, *Prakopa*, *Prasara*, *Sthanasamśraya*, *Vyakti*, and *Bheda*-demonstrate a gradual transition from functional imbalance to structural and systemic pathology. Particularly significant is the *Sanchaya* stage, where *Doshas* accumulate without overt clinical disease. At this level, disturbances are subtle and reversible. From a modern physiological perspective, this stage closely parallels early functional dysregulation- such as impaired gut motility, mild hepatic stress, metabolic slowdown, or low-grade inflammation- where homeostatic mechanisms are strained but not yet structurally damaged. The article effectively bridges Ayurvedic theory with contemporary biomedical understanding, like *Vata Sanchaya* correlates with early gastrointestinal dysmotility and autonomic imbalance, *Pitta Sanchaya* reflects mild hepatic overload, enzyme inefficiency, or early inflammatory shifts, *Kapha Sanchaya* corresponds to reduced metabolic rate, fluid retention, insulin resistance tendencies, and sedentary lifestyle patterns. This comparative analysis strengthens the relevance of Ayurveda in modern preventive medicine. The Ayurvedic principles of *Nidana Parivarjana* (removal of causes), *Langhana* (lightening therapy), *Deepana-Pachana* (digestive correction), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regulation), and *Dinacharya* (daily regimen) align closely with current recommendations involving dietary moderation, metabolic optimization, circadian rhythm regulation, stress reduction, and early screening.

Most importantly, *Shat Kriyakala* offers multiple therapeutic windows. Early stages (*Sanchaya* and *Prakopa*) are highly reversible; middle stages (*Prasara* and *Sthanasamśraya*) require more targeted intervention; later stages (*Vyakti* and *Bheda*) demand intensive management and may involve complications or chronicity. This graded intervention model parallels modern preventive levels-primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention.

#### **CONCLUSION**

*Shat Kriyakala* is a unique and comprehensive model of disease progression that underscores the importance of timely diagnosis and intervention. It presents disease as a gradual, predictable process beginning with subtle *Doshic* imbalance and culminating in structural pathology and complications if left unmanaged. The *Sanchaya* stage, in particular, represents a critical preventive opportunity where

functional disturbances are still reversible. When interpreted through modern physiology, this stage corresponds to early homeostatic disruption- offering valuable scope for lifestyle correction, dietary regulation, metabolic optimization, and stress management before irreversible damage occurs. By harmonizing ancient Ayurvedic wisdom with contemporary preventive medicine, *Shat Kriyakala* emerges as a powerful integrative framework. It encourages proactive healthcare rather than reactive disease management. Recognizing and addressing early imbalances not only prevents disease progression but also promotes sustained physical, mental, and systemic well-being. Ultimately, *Shat Kriyakala* reaffirms Ayurveda's foundational goal: preservation of health in the healthy and alleviation of disease in the diseased, through timely, individualized, and stage-specific intervention.<sup>[19]</sup>

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