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Clinical significance of *Kriyakala* in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient bunch of knowledge which 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 the recognition of the stage of a disease's progress, which helps to determine appropriate measure to correct the imbalance in *Doshas* (biological factors). It is a compound expression, comprised of *Kriya* and *Kala*, where *Kriya* means the choice to treatment (medicine, food and daily-routine) used to improve the disturbance in *Doshas*, and *Kala* refers to the stage of progress of a disease. The six stages mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta* gives an idea regarding the state of the disease in the body and it guides us when to intervene. Early diagnosis of diseases helps to cure the diseases successfully without much discomfort in planning treatment. The primary objective of this study is to describe the importance of *Kriyakala* in prognosis and diagnosis of the disease. The concept is traced through classical texts. *Kriyakala* gives us the knowledge of diagnosis, prognosis and the level of intervention and so that to prevent the establishment of a disease.

Key words: *Kriyakala*, *Vyadhi*, *Dosha*, *Dushya*, *disease*, *etiological factors*.

INTRODUCTION

Kriyakala is a unique concept in Ayurveda which gives us an idea of diagnosis and prognosis of a disease. The word meaning of *Kriyakala* refers to treatment modalities which can be applied during the stages of a disease.^[1] In modern science, disease can be recognized in two stages: the first stage is detection of the disease, and the second encompasses the complications due to a particular disease. However, *Ayurveda* identifies six stages of any disease (*Shatkriyakala*), where the visible symptoms of a disease and its complications occupy the last two

places. Interestingly, before the appearance of external symptoms, Ayurveda has the ability to detect and treat the underlying causes of a disease. The main active factors in the development of a disease are *Ama* (autotoxin) toxicity and the mobility of the *Doshas* (biological factors).

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).^[2] *Acharya Charaka* and *Acharya Vagbhata* explains three stages of *Dosha Vriddhi* in *Kiyantashereashiya Adhyaya* and *Doshabhedhiya Adhyaya* Respectively. *Acharya Sushruta* explains the concept of *Shatkriyakala In Vranaprashnaadhyaya* where he explains that the *Vyadhi Utapatti* (disease formation) involves *Dosha Dushya Sammurchana* (conglomeration of *Dosha and Dushya*) which exhibits the *Vyadhi Avastha*.^[3]

Sanchaya (Stage of accumulation)

Sanchaya, the first stage of *Kriyakala*, describes the collection or accumulation of *Doshas* due to various causative factors.^[4] In this stage, *Doshas* accumulates

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but do not leave their own place (e.g. *Vata* builds up in the bones, *Pitta* in the blood and *Kapha* in the lymph and muscles). The etiology of *Sanchaya* can be of either *Kala Swabhava* (natural) or *Trividha Hetu* (three causative factors). The three causative factors are *Prajnaparadha* (misleading), *Asatmendriyartha Samyoga* (improper use of sensory organs) and *Vyapanna Hetu* (inherent cause),^[5] which include seasonal changes, day-night changes and changes in food and regimen. In this stage there will be hatredness towards the similar *Gunas* as that of the *Sanchitha Dosh* and desire towards the opposite one.^[6] For instance in case of *Vata Sanchaya* there will be hatredness towards *Ruksadi Dravyas* and desire towards *Snigdhadhi Dravyas*. Due to which *Sanchitha Dosh* can be assessed.

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* are ready to move from their own place to another.^[7] On the basis of this observation, it is assumed that the *Prakopa* stage is developed due to continuous intake of improper *Ahara* (food), *Vihara* (regiment) and *Aushadha* (medicine). The *Dosha Vriddhi* (increase in biological humours) occurs in a liquid state at its own place which is of two types, i.e., *Chayapurvaka* and *Achayapurvaka Prakopa*. *Chayapurvaka* describes reaching *Prakopa* after passing through *Sanchaya*, whereas *Achayapurvaka Prakopa* is characterized by reaching *Prakopa* without prior accumulation. In *Achayapurvaka Prakopa*, although *Doshas* become abnormal, the damage caused by these abnormal *Doshas* can be curable.^[8] The *Prakopa* stage can be diagnosed on the basis of continuous *Chaya Lakshanas* (features of aggravated biological factors), desire for opposite *Gunas* (fundamental attributes) and aversion to similar *Gunas*.

Prasara (Stage of spread)

Prasara is a stage of spreading, in which the causative factors continue and *Prakopa* stage has affected the *Doshas*. In *Prakopa* stage, the *Doshas*, which have

remained in the place so far, become ready to move. Now in *Prasara* stage, the *Doshas* overflow and spread or move to other areas or organs of the body. *Acharya Sushruta* explains this stage by giving simile of "*Kinvodaka- Pista Samyoga*". *Kinva*, *Udaka* and grinded rice grains are mixed and kept in a vessel all over the night leading to fermentation process. This fermentation leads to spreading of the contents out of the vessel in the same way the aggravated *Doshas* starts spreading from its abode.^[9] The pathogenesis of *Prasara* stage has been described in most of the *Samhitha* (ancient texts) due to its significance in the manifestation of a disease. In this stage, *Doshas* spread all over the body starting from sole to the cerebrum. *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas*, as well as *dhatu*s and *malas* are inert substances and can be increased in quantity but cannot move from one place to another. *Vata Dosh*, on the other hand, helps to move *Pitta*, *Kapha*, *Dhatu*s and *Malas* to other places. Thus, it appears that the *Vata* is a key factor that mediates the *Prasara* stage in the disease manifestation process. In this stage, the vitiated *Doshas* continuously spread outside of their normal sites unless the causative agent is treated. However, failing to treat causative factors at this stage can lead to irreversible pathogenesis. In *Prasara* stage, diagnosis can be made with the help of clinical involvement.

Sthanasamshraya (Stage of localisation)

Sthanasamshraya (localization) or the settlement of *Doshas* at a particular place occurs when vitiated *Doshas* are circulating and settle in areas of *Srotovagunya* (depletion of tissue).^[10] Certain causative factors which have enough potential to cause damage are responsible to settle *Doshas* at a particular site. There are only few sites called *Khavaigunya* (weak or defective site), which are prone to the settlement of *Doshas*. These weak or defective sites may have tissue depletion or certain disturbances in their normal surface. Furthermore, a specific causative factor may have an affinity towards particular channels or tissues, which leads to a defective site on the manifestation of a disease. The localization of *Doshas* at sites in the abdomen

produces disorders related to the stomach and urinary bladder. When the *Doshas* are localized in the skin, muscle or blood, the condition may lead to skin diseases like leprosy, whereas localization in fatty tissues of the body causes cysts, tumor and goitre.^[11] It suggests that a particular disease is produced by the localization of *Dosha* at a particular site of the body.

All the etiological factors may not be causative for a disease; every tissue of the body may requires its own etiological factor related to particular involved *Doshas* and *Dusyas* (body tissues, i.e., *Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Majja* and *Shukra*). For example, a particular pathogen has a specific affinity towards a particular tissue, where it causes a disease. It is assumed that an exogenous factor itself by triggering *Dosha* causes tissue depletion which can be called as the foundation of a disease. Besides, if *Khavaigunya* already exists at the time of *Dosha Prakopa* (perhaps due to *Dhatu Kshaya* or depletion of body tissue), in such conditions, the *Doshas* may cause any kind of disease. In such conditions, the union of *Doshas/Dusyas* at a particular site is called *Sthanasamsraya*.

Vyaktha (Stage of manifestation)

If the causative factors present in *Sthanasamsraya* are not treated and continue, *Dosha* enters into *Vyakthi* (manifestation) stage, in which all the symptoms of a disease appear,^[12] hence called *Rupa Avastha*. A particular disease depends upon the vitiation of a particular *Dosha* and the interaction of a particular *Dhatu* (body tissue), as well as the extent of their mixture.

Bheda (Stage of chronicity)

Bedha is the final stage where the progression of a disease reaches an end. Complications from living with a disease may bring about other diseases, and finally may lead to death.^[13] In this stage, the disease is usually diagnosed by its complications; the treatment of both the disease and its complication has to be done otherwise the treatment may not be possible. However, in *Bedha*, the survival rate is generally decreased.

Table 1: *Vyadhi Kriyakala and Dosha Lakshanas*^[14]

Dosha	Sanchaya	Prakopa	Prasara
Vata	<i>Stabhakosta</i> (tyimpanitis) <i>Poorna Kosta</i> (fullness of GIT)	<i>Kostatoda</i> (pricking pain in GIT) <i>Doshasancharana</i> (movement of doshas in GIT)	<i>Vimargagamana</i> <i>Atopa</i> (fullness of abdomen)
Pitta	<i>Peetavabasa</i> (yellowish discolouration) <i>Mandoshma</i> (lowdigestion)	<i>Amlika</i> (sour belching) <i>Pipasa</i> (thirst) <i>Paridaha</i> (burning sensation)	<i>Osha</i> (increased body temperature) <i>Chosha</i> <i>Paridaha</i> (burning sensation) <i>Dumayana</i>
Kapha	<i>Anga gourava</i> (bodyache) <i>Alasya</i> (tiredness)	<i>Annadweshya</i> (aversion towards food) <i>Hrudayotkleda</i> (fullness of heart)	<i>Arocaka</i> (anorexia) <i>Avipaka</i> (indigestion) <i>Angasada</i> (body pain) <i>Chardi</i> (vomiting)

DISCUSSION

The concept of *Shatkriyakala* is of utmost importance from public health intervention point of view and more especially from the perspective of disease control strategy. *Kriyakala* gives an opportunity at each stage to halt the disease process by appropriate measures. *Kriyakala* is similar to what has been described as 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 stage of susceptibility is also called as stage of "pre-pathogenesis" by some authorities. In this stage, the risk factors and the host should interact with each other in a suitable and favourable environment for the disease to occur. At the *Prasara* and *Sthanasanshraya Avastha*, the vitiated or aggravated *Dosha* start moving and get settled at a particular organ or organ system. At this stage, the disease is neither clearly evident nor completely

buried. Hence, the diagnosis of a disease becomes difficult at this stage. The modern tools and techniques cannot identify the disease at this stage. This stage is comparable with that of pre-symptomatic disease where the disease process has already begun, but the over signs and symptoms are not evident. The fifth stage of *Shatkriyakala* is *Vyakti* where the disease is clinically manifested. This is comparable with the stage of clinical disease in natural history of disease. As this stage is marked with clinical signs and symptoms, the modes of intervention at this stage would be early diagnosis and treatment. 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. Hence, the strategies described in *Shatkriyakala* for the prevention and management of clinical entities can be applied at individual and community level which bears considerable public health importance.

CONCLUSION

The proper knowledge of *Shatakriyakala* helps in understanding the process of manifestation of various diseases as well as to diagnose the diseases. The physician who is capable of differentiating and understanding these six stages of *Dosha*; diagnose and treat the disease accurately according to *Shatakriyakala* will become a *Bhishak* i.e., successful practitioner. The knowledge of *Shatakriyakala* is helpful for knowing what kind of treatment should be administered in respective stage of *Dosha*. It precisely gives idea of the *Sadhyaasadyatva* of disease. After all the elaboration about the topic *Acharyas* warn the physician not to procrastinate *Kriyakala* in any way that it will lead to *Asadyata* of *Vyadhi* and failure in *Chikitsa*. Hence, the concept of *Shatkriyakala* delineated in classical treatises of *Ayurveda* are of great significance.

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