



Review Article

# A review of classification of disease in Ayurveda

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## Abstract

According to Charaka Samhita, the disease is the state in which both the body and mind are subject to pain and misery. There is need of classification of disease which is caused by exogenous and endogenous factors. Generally, the classification gives the idea about the type and difference between diseases. Classification of disease is very essential for the treatment of the diseased individual. Unskilled physicians, who are unable to identify nature of disease, examine patient by applying sensory organ which provides only superficial knowledge of disease. To know the whole nature of disease, one should know the classification of disease which is based on origin of disease, causative factor, surgical cure or nonsurgical cure, infected organ etc.

## Key words

Dosha as cause of disease, Numerability and Innumerability of disease, Classification of disease, Types of disease.

## Introduction

The disease has been defined as the state in which both the body and mind are subjected to pain and misery [1]. Shabdastoma Mahanidhi [1] has referred disease as the mind which is ever anxious to be free from pain and misery. Charakacharya defined disease as any

disturbance in equilibrium of dhatus and on other side the state of their equilibrium is health (Arogya). Sushruta [2] defined disease as conjugation of the living being with pain. Arundatta, the commentator of Vagbhata has described disease as term which implies, the infliction of pain, either on the mind or body or both [3]. In Bruhatrayee, diseases are classified as one type, two type, three type, four type, six type and seven type but essential criteria for classification are causative factor, prognosis, pathophysiology and treatment [4].

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Synonyms of diseases are explained as amaya, gada, yakshma and vyadhi. Amaya as disease are engendered by ama. Gada means multiplicity of cause which engendered by disease status. Yakshma means certain diseases according to Ayurveda exhibit the features of many other disease i.e. symptom complex or syndrome, as can be illustrated with the example of jwara which is characterized by aalyasa, arochaka etc. Hence, yakshma is synonym given to vyadhi (Disease) [5].

### Classification of diseases

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According to Bruhatrayee, diseases are classified in various types according to need of treatment, causative factor and prognosis. Doshas are internal cause of disease and essential factor for exogenous type of disease. Without vitiated Doshas formation, disease is Impossible.

**Dosha - as cause of disease** [1] – The nature of the exciting factors of the disease are many and varied. The actual internal factor which become excited and imbalanced, either conferring a predisposition to or actually causing morbidities are Vata, Pitta and Kapha. These three factors are susceptible to imbalance and vitiation. They vitiate structural and functional elements of body. The state of equilibrium means Samyata, is stated to be disease free state i.e. Health (Arogyata), as disease state to be an imbalance of their equilibrium [6].

Dosha and diseases having close relation which can be explained by cause effect relationship. (Karyakaran Sidhanta) In which, Intimate cause (Samvayi karan) is vitiated Dosha, Non Intimate cause (Asamvayi karan) is vitiated Dosha and Dushya and Instrumental cause is Hetu (aahar-viharadi). All this karana (causes) are responsible for disease (effect). But intimate cause i.e. Dosha is intrinsic factor and main cause of disease [7].

### Numerability and Innumerability of disease –

According charakacharya, diseases are numerable and innumerable due to various roots of classification [3]. Actually these two terms numerability and innumerability are opposite to each other, Individual has the liberty to classify things as he likes. (Bhetta hi bhedyamanyatha bhinnate) [6]. If something is already classified into some groups in particular manner, he may reclassify it on the basis of different criteria which may result in changes in the number of group in different ways. This does not invalidate the number of groups according to some other mode of classification. In some cases, the criteria of classification may appear to be the same as the previous one but the specific features of each of these should be observe in deciding about validity of this classification. The same term may carry different meanings e.g. the word “Roga” denotes both the Doshas as well as Disease. Similarly various terms which are synonymous may denote only one thing e.g. Roga, Atanka, Yakshma and Vikara [3].

Actually numerability and innumerability is based on varied criteria like causative factor, severity of pain, colour, and place of disease and name of disease.

- 1) Causative factor - dry for Vata, wet for Kapha, heat for Pitta
- 2) Severity of Pain – According to different types of Vata
- 3) Colour – paleness of skin, eyes
- 4) Sthana (organ) – In Amashaya (Stomach) like organ, due to Vatadi dosha producing symptoms at that site produces different types of disease [9]. Classification of disease according to various Acharya is as per **Table - 1**.

### One type classification

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According to Kashyapa, pain (peeda kartuttva) is common between all the diseases. So Rogatva is single type of disease. Haarita stated Karmaja



means disease occur due to man Karma which done in past [10].

### Two type classification

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**Classification of diseases according to Charakacharya is as per Table – 2.**

**Classification of diseases according to Sushrutacharya [11]:**

- 1) Shastrasadhya Vyadhi (Surgically curable disease)
- 2) Svedadisadhya Vyadhi (Non surgically curable disease)

**Classification of diseases according to Ashtang Hrudya [2]:**

- 1) Prakrut (Easily curable) and Vaikrut (Difficult to cure)
  - 2) Anubandhya (Primary disease) and Anubandha (Secondary disease)
- Where Anubandh disease (Primary disease) are further classified as
- 1) Purvaj (disease due to bad act of previous life)
  - 2) Upadravaj (complication)

**Classification of diseases according to Ashtangasangrah [12]:**

- 1) Karma (born from the effect of bad acts of human), further classified as pratyuttapanna karmaj (disease born due to present act of human) and Purvakarmaj (born from the effect of bad acts of past live)
- 2) Apararpanaj vyadhi (over nutrition diseases) and Santarpanjanya vyadhi (under nutritional diseases)

### Three type classification

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**Classification of diseases according to Sushrutacharya [13]:**

- A) 1. Sadhyaa (Curable disease)
2. Yaapyaa (Palliable disease)

3. Pratyakhey (Incurable disease)
- B) 1. Adhyatmik (Constitutional type)
  2. Adhibhoutik (Environmental stresses).
  3. Aadhidaivik (disease caused due to acts of god)

**Classification of diseases according to Charkacharya [9]:**

As per sharira (body) and mana (mind):

- 1) Nija (endogenous disease)
- 2) Agantuj (exogenous disease)
- 3) manasa (mind)

As per Dosha:

- 1) Ekdoshaj (due to one dominant dosha)
- 2) Dvidoshaj (due to two dominant Dosha)
- 3) Sannipatik (due to all three dominant Dosha)

Saamanyaj vyadhi (General type):

- 1) Vataj,
- 2) Pittaj,
- 3) Sannipataj

**Classification of diseases on the basis of root of occurrence [9]:**

- 1) Shaakhagat (external root)
- 2) Marmasthi (middle root)
- 3) Koshtgat (internal root)

**Classification of diseases on the basis of its nature [3]:**

- 1) Agni (caused by heating attribute)
- 2) Soumya (caused by cooling attribute)
- 3) Vayavya (caused by Vata quality)

**Classification of diseases according to Ashtanghrudya [2]:**

- 1) Doshaj (born from disease)
- 2) Karmaj (born from effect of bad act of previous live)
- 3) Dosh karmaj (combination of both Doshaj and Karmaj)



### Four type classification

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#### Classification of diseases according to charakacharya [6]:

- 1) Aagantuj (exogenous disease)
- 2) Vataj Vyadhi
- 3) Pittaj Vyadhi
- 4) Kaphaj Vyadhi

#### Classification of diseases according to sushrutacharya [11]:

- 1) Aagantuj (exogenous disease)
- 2) Sharira (physical disease)
- 3) Manasa (mental disease)
- 4) Svabhavik (natural disease)

### Six type classification

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#### Classification of diseases according to Kashyapsahita [14]:

On the basis of Matruj Dugdha Rasa (mother milk's taste):

- 1) Madhur (sweet)
- 2) Amla (sour)
- 3) Lavana (lavana)
- 4) Katu (bitter)
- 5) Tikta (pungent)
- 6) Kashay (astringent)

### Seven type classification

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#### Classification of diseases according to Sushrutacharya [2]:

1. Aadibalapravrutta (hereditary disease)
2. Janmabalpravrutta (congenital disease)
3. Doshbalpravrutta (humoraldisease)
4. Kalbalpravrutta (ecological disease)
5. Daivbalpravrutta (supernatural disease)
6. Svabhavbalpravrutta (natural diseases)
7. Sanghatbalpravrutta (traumatic disease)

#### Classification of diseases according to Ashatangsangrah [3]:

On the basis of Doshas:

- 1) Vataj
- 2) Pittaj
- 3) Kaphaj
- 4) Vata-Pittaj
- 5) Pitta-Kaphaj
- 6) Vata-Kaphaj

On the basis of Doshas:

- 1) Sahaj (Hereditary disease)
- 2) Garbhaj (Congenital disease)
- 3) Jataj (Humoral disease)
- 4) Kalaj (Ecological disease)
- 5) Prabhavaj (Super natural disease)
- 6) Svabhavaj (Natural diseases)
- 7) Peedajanya (Traumatic disease)

#### Classification of diseases according to Ashtanghrudya [15]:

- 1) Sahaj (Hereditary disease)
- 2) Garbhaj (Congenital disease)
- 3) Jataj (Humoral disease)
- 4) Kalaj (Ecological disease)
- 5) Prabhavaj (Super natural disease)
- 6) Svabhavaj (Natural diseases)
- 7) Peedajanya (Traumatic disease)

### Discussion

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The classification having various criteria, on the basis of

- 1) How disease is born
- 2) Origin of disease
- 3) Cure of disease
- 4) Inflamed organ
- 5) The way of diagnosis

#### One type classification

This one type disease classification is described by Kashpacharya and Harita, based on common character like pain (aiko rogo rujakarana samarthyat) and Karmaja disease (born from the effect of bad acts of person) i.e. personal behavior of human.



### Two type classification

These classifications are described by various Acharya considering treatment, curability, infected organ, vitiated dosha etc.

According to Charakacharya, there were two types: Samanyaja (General type) and Nanatmaja (Specific type) in which Samanyaja having 48 diseases and Nanatmaja having 120 diseases. Samanyaja Vyadhi arises when there is imbalance of one or all dosha. It is caused due to disequilibrium of anyone of doshas. Nanatmaja disease is caused due to disequilibrium of one particular Dosha. Samanyaja having further classification Ekdoshaj (disease caused by one dosha), Dvidoshaj (disease caused by two dosha), Tridoshaj (disease caused by three dosha). Nanatmaja vyadhi is based on the endogenous factor having combination of dosha while samanyaja are having causative factor single dosha, combination of dosha and exogenous factor. Samanyaja are 48 types having different causative factors. Nanatmaja include causative factor purely Doshas. Causative factor of nanatmaja vyadhi are endogenous having characteristic of dosha and similar to Gunas (Quality). This classification is based on the nidan (diagnosis), pain severity, location of disease and powerful of guna (quality).

In roganik adhyay (C. Vi. 6), there are 10 fold classification of disease having two types. On the basis of prognosis - curable and incurable, intensity - mild and severe, location - mental and physical, nature of causative factor - endogenous and exogenous, site of origin - having origin from amashaya (stomach) or pakvashaya (intestine).

Even diseases are of two groups and each according to above criteria but different permutation and combination, only pain is common to all. Curable diseases are of two

types that can be cured easily and other with some difficulty, similarly incurable disease are of two types one is palliable other is absolutely irreversible. Again curable diseases have three alternates depending on the moderate and excellent devices required to cure them. This alternation is however, not possible with regard to disease which are absolutely incurable.

Incurable diseases are classified as one is palliable and other is incurable. The palliable disease patient survived for certain period by following wholesome regimen and such has enjoyed a little relief but even slightest carelessness might instantaneously aggravate condition.

In absolute incurable, all Dosha, Dhātu, and sense organ affected. Affected patient is weak but sufficiently advanced having bad prognosis. Also Charakacharya given another classification, Anubandh (Primary disease) - Anubandhya (Secondary). Dosha vitiated during the process of manifestation of disease may be of Anubandh (Primary) and Anubandhya (Secondary). There are various factors which vitiate different dosha. If such factor is responsible for the vitiation of Dosha, particular Dosha should treat as primary nature. In secondary disease manifest their respective symptoms only when they are stimulated by the Dosha of primary nature means subordinate disease. Dosha do not aggravated by the factors responsible for their aggravation nor do they get alleviated by the therapy prescribed specially for them. They get alleviated only when therapy prescribed for the other Dosha is administered. That is to say that, aggravation and alleviation of subordinate Dosha are effected by causative factor and therapies, other than own.

The classification given in the Roganikviman Adhyay (C. Vi. 6/2) stated the justification of different type of disease, if something, already



classified in particular manner, is reclassified in other way following different criteria, there may be a change in the number of group, and such a change should not render the statement suggesting such a classification incorrect. On the other hand, if there is no change in the number of groups, this does not necessarily justify the mode of classification. It is true that disease are of one group in view of the pain as common factor to all, but if they are considered to be of one group according to prognosis (prabhava) also, this will not be correct statement in as much as disease are actually of two groups (curable and incurable).

A reply to the query as how two terms having mutually opposite meaning can be applied to same thing which is disease. If the same criteria are followed for classification, any change in the number of grouping will be incorrect. On the other side, if the criteria of classification are different the change in number of grouping is quite justifiable and this does not involve opposite meaning.

Individual has the liberty to classify things as he likes. If something is already classified into some groups in particular manner, he may reclassify it on the basis of different criteria which may result in changes in the number of group in different ways. This does not invalidate the number of groups according to some other mode of classification. In some cases the criteria of classification may appear to be the same as the previous one but the specific feature of each of these should be observe in deciding about validity of classification. The same term may carry different meanings e.g. the word "Roga" denotes both the doshas as well as disease. Similarly various terms which are synonymous may denote only one thing, e.g. Roga Atanka Yakshma, and Vikara. Another classification is guru (serious disease) and laghu (mild disease) which is based on prognosis of disease [9].

Two types classification is also done by sushrutacharya as surgical cure and non surgical cure. This is based on treatment like administration of purgatives, emetics, oils, diaphoretics and unguents.

According to Ashatang samgraha, Prakrut (easily curable) and Vaikrut (difficult to cure), this classification is done on the basis Rhutukul (season) which is explained in the Nidansthana Jvaranidana which stated that disease origin in rhotu (season) with prokopa (aggravation) of dosha produces type of disease which is easily curable for example Vataj jvara origin in Varsha rhotu (rainy season) due to Vataj dosha is curable because in this type of disease only treatment of vitiated Vataj dosha which is easily curable, if in varsh rhotu there is origin of pittaj jvara then it is difficult to treat as there vataj dosha as well as pittaj dosha is vitiated it is difficult to treat the disease i.e Vaikuta. This classification was done on the basis of rhotukul and vitiated dosha. This was also followed by ashatang hrudya. Ashtangsangraha explained in Sutrasthana 22 in Rogbhediya Adhyay after seven fold classification why the seven types of disease occur is explained giving another two type classification i.e. pratiuttapan karmaj (disease born due to present act of human) purvakarmaja (disease born due to present act of human) and pratiuttapan karmaj disease are due to the karma of the sharira and purvakarmaj vyadhi are due to the act bad act of past live [15].

### Three type classification

Charak samhita also mentioned three types of classification which is shakhagat (peripheral system), marmasthi (vital organs and joint bones), koshtagat (central system). This classification was based on disease occurring specific path. Also another classification is Nija (Endogenous), Aagantuj (Exogenous) and maanas (Mental) disease. This based on Sharira





(Body) and Mana (Mind). This classification followed by Ashtanga Samgraha [8].

According to Sushruta, three type of classification is Sadhya (Curable disease), Yaapya (Palliable disease), Pratyakhey (Incurable disease) which is based on pariksha (examination), aupsargika (complication), prakkevala (disease proper) and anyalakshana (premonitory symptom). Aupsargika (complication) is that symptoms appear before manifestation of disease. Prakkevala (disease proper) is symptoms which manifested from beginning without premonitory symptoms. Anyalakshana is premonitory symptom. Another three types of classification by Sushrutacharya is Adhyatmik (Constitutional type), Adhibhoutik (Environmental stresses), and aadhidaivik (Disease caused due to acts of god) which is based on the nature of Abhighata or stress, responsible for their causation. Adhyatmik or constitutional type i.e. those due to intrinsic somatic or sharirika (physical) and manasika (mental) or psychic kinds of disturbance. Adhibhotik are those which are caused by environmental stresses. Aadhidaivik types are those which are caused by providential cause's (acts of god).

They are based on the recognition of various kind of stress to which man is subjected to and to the assault or abhighataj to which he stands exposed. These assaults or abhighata on him, may from other living forms, that aim to invade as parasites or to destroy, by metrological and climatic crisis that sometimes predictably or often whimsically pass over earth's surface by other physical forces that operate upon man in terms of his mass and volume i.e. aadhidaivik and by elements of earth crust which man often dangerously manipulates for the promotion of his comfort and pleasure, or to fulfill his passion for destruction (aadhibhotika – pradynaparadh).

In Ashtangasangraha, three type classifications is Endogenous (Nija), Exogenous (Aagantuj) and Mental (maanas) disease. This based on sharira (Body) and Mana (Mind).

As per Ashtang hrudayam, three type classification is Doshaj (born from Doshas), Karmaj (born from the effect of bad acts of previous live), and Dosh Karmaj (born combination of Doshas and bad act of previous lives). This classification is based on performance of human. If he is doing bad acts in present life then Doshaj vyadhi will be produce. If diseases will arise without any cause are known as Karmaja (bad acts of previous live). If disease had severe or terrible onset are known Doshakarmaja (born combination of Doshas and bad act of previous lives).

#### **Four type classification**

According to Sushruta, four type classifications are Aagantuj (Exogenous), Sharira (Physical) Manasa (Mental), Svabhavik (Natural). This classification is based cause of disease. Aagantuj (Exogenous) diseases are caused by injury; physical ones are caused by food, drinks through disequilibrium of Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Rakta, and Sannipata. Mental diseases are anger, sorrow, fear, exhilaration, envy, jealousy, anxiety caused by different forms of desire and aversion. Natural diseases are hunger, thirst, senility, death, sleep and those caused by constitution [2].

#### **Six type classification**

This type of classification is explained by Kashyapa, which based on Matruj stanyaa (mother milk taste).

- 1) Madhur (sweet)
- 2) Amla (sour)
- 3) Lavana (lavana)
- 4) Katu (bitter)
- 5) Tikta (pungent)
- 6) Kashay (astringent).



This classification is based on taste of stanya which main factor for disease causing in neonates.

### Seven type classification

Classification of diseases according to Sushrutacharya [2]:

- 1) Aadibalapravrutta (Hereditary disease)
- 2) Janmbalpravrutta (Congenital disease)
- 3) Doshbalpravrutta (Humeral disease)
- 4) Kalbalpravrutta (Ecological disease)
- 5) Daivbalpravrutta (Supernatural disease)
- 6) Svabhavbalpravrutta (Natural diseases)
- 7) Sanghatbalpravrutta (traumatic disease)

**1) Aadibalapravrutta (Hereditary disease):** The origin of disease included under this heading by Sushrutacharya is attributed to defect inherent in either Shukra (male reproductive element) or Shonita or Bija (female reproductive element) which forms the primary factors of being the disease included under an inherited susceptibility to disease like Kushta (Chronic skin diseases), Arsha (Piles), Prameha (like diabetes mellitus), and Kshaya (like tuberculosis).

**2) Janmbalpravrutta (Congenital disease):** The kind of disease included under this category comprise of congenital type. They are attributed to errors in conduct of the mother during period of pregnancy. It includes various defects and maladies such as congenital blindness, deafness, dumbness, nasal voice and dwarfism. This variety admits of two types according as condition Rasakruta (Nutritional) and other due to Dauhradya (full cravings of the mother during period of pregnancy).

**3) Doshabala pravrutta (Humeral disease):** Disease belonging to this class is engendered by the action of anyone of the tridosha. The cause of disorder is faulty diet and behavior or due to up heaves of the two manasika dosha rajas and tamas. The group of disease included under this

category is subdivided under two heads, as the disease found to have its origin in amashaya (stomach) or in pakvashaya (intestine). Each of these again may be classified further two main division sharirik (physical) and manasika (mental). All these morbidities are belongs to the Adhyatmika.

**4) Sanghatbala pravrutta (Traumatic disease):** Disease belonging to this category caused by aabhighata (trauma), such as external and internal injuries due to blows or inflicted by sharp instruments (shastrakrutaa); due to overstrain such as wrestling with an opponent of superior strength. These can be classified as the disease caused by external injury by bite of wild animal (vyaalakruta) or poisonous reptile. This morbidities are belongs to aadhibauthika (Environmental stresses).

**5) Kalabala pravrutta (Ecological disease):** This group includes diseases, which are caused by meteorological changes such as variation in the atmospheric temperature like hot or cold, humidity or dryness, rain and wind, incidental change in season. These disease can be classified under two subheadings as exhibit either their natural or normal traits or abnormal, such normal or perverse traits the former is responsible for the causation of disorder arising out of the usual adaptive reaction of the body. They are known as avyaappannakruta (caused by abnormal seasons) and vyappnnakruta (caused in normal season) disease consequent on inability of the body to adapt itself to sudden and abnormal climatic and seasonal variation.

**6) Daivabalapravrutta (Supernatural disease):** Supernatural are those which are caused by god's wrath, curse of sages, Atharvan's (magic spell) and calamities; they also two type – caused by lightning and thunderbolt and those causes by evil spirit (demons); again these are





two type – contagious (or infectious) and accidental.

**7) Svabhavbala (Natural diseases):** This type includes disease which arise due to natural organic and functional changes in the body and mind such as due to senility, death, hunger, thirst, sleep brought about in person who have strictly adhere to or followed prescribed rules of health in the normal course of events due to efflux of time. These conditions are known as kalakruta (timely). On the other hand occurrence of changes in body and mind prematurely are classed under heading akalkruta (untimely). These occur largely due to leading of unhealthy modes of life [2].

According to ashtanga samgraha, there also seven fold classification given as sahaj, garbhaj, kalaj, jataj, peedajanya, prabhavjanya, svabhavjanya roga [12]. This classification is same as the sushrutacharya's seven fold classification which is

Sahaj – like Adibalapravrutta (Hereditary disease)  
Garbhaj – like Janmabala pravrutta (Congenital disease)  
Jaataj – like Doshabala pravrutta (Humeral disease)  
Kalaj – like Kalbal pravrutta (Ecological disease)  
Prabhavaj – like Daivabala pravrutta (Supernatural disease)  
Svabhavaj – like Svabhavbala pravrutta (Natural diseases)  
Peedajanya - like Sanghatbala pravrutta (Traumatic disease).

It is based on the karmaja of man which is done by sharira and purvkarmaja (bad act of previous life).

## Conclusion

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In Ayurveda, multiple approaches are considered for classification of disease. According to purush purush veekshya nyaaya, Vaidhya (doctor) have a full Liberty to go for newer and newer classification of disease, provided different criteria for classification. On the basis of classification, we can easily make a differential diagnosis of disease and prognosis.

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**Table – 1:** Classification of disease according to various Acharya.

Acharya	Charak	Sushrut	Ashtang Hrudya	Ashtaang Samgrah	Kashyapa	Haarita
One type					1	1
Two type	11	3	3	1		
Three type	4	1	1	1		
Four type	2	1	1			
Six type					1	
Seven type		1	1	2		

**Table - 2:** Charakacharya's classification of disease.

Prognosis	Sadhya (Curable)	Asadhya (Incurable)
Intensity	Laghu (Mild)	Guru (Severe)
Location	Manaski (Mental)	Sharira (Physical)
Nature of causative factor	Nija (Endogenous)	Agantuj (Exogenous)
Site of origin	Origin from Amashaya (Stomach)	Origin from Pakvashaya (intestine)
Vitiatisation of Dosha	Anubandh (Primary Disease)	Anubandhy (Secondary Disease)
Sadhya (Curable Disease)	Sukhasadhya (cured easily)	Kruchsadhya (cured with difficulty)
Asadhya (Incurable Disease)	Yaapya (palliable)	Asadhya (absolute irreversible)
Nature of Disease	Guru (serious disease)	Laghu (mild disease)
Prominent Dosha	Samanyaja (general type)	Nanatmaja (specific type)