

"Aragwadhadi Avaleha as a Virechaka Yoga: a Comprehensive Review"

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Abstract

Virechana Karma (therapeutic purgation) represents one of the principal bio-purification procedures (*Panchakarma*) in *Ayurvedic* medicine, specifically designed to eliminate vitiated *Pitta dosha* and associated morbid substances through the anal route. *Aragwadhadi Avaleha*, a classical *Ayurvedic* formulation documented in the *Charaka Samhita Kalpa Sthana*, stands as a significant *Virechaka Yoga* (purgative preparation) that combines three potent ingredients: *Aragwadha* (Cassia fistula Linn.), *Trivrut* (*Operculina turpethum* Linn.), and *Guda* (jaggery).

This comprehensive review aims to systematically analyze the individual drug profiles, classical preparation methodology, therapeutic indications, and clinical applications of *Aragwadhadi Avaleha* as described in the *Charaka Samhita*, supported by contemporary pharmacological evidence.

A thorough search of classical *Ayurvedic* texts, particularly the *Charaka Samhita Kalpa Sthana* Chapter 8, was conducted alongside modern scientific literature from electronic databases including PubMed, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. The review encompasses phytochemical analysis, pharmacological studies, and clinical applications of each ingredient.

Aragwadhadi Avaleha emerges as a well-balanced *Virechaka Yoga* that effectively combines mild purgative action with therapeutic benefits for skin diseases, digestive disorders, and *Pitta*-related conditions. The classical preparation method ensures optimal bioavailability and efficacy, warranting further clinical validation.

Keywords: *Aragwadhadi Avaleha*, *Virechana Karma*, Cassia fistula, *Operculina turpethum*, *Virechaka Yoga*, *Charaka Samhita*, *Panchakarma*

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Virechana Karma* in *Ayurvedic* Medicine

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes the maintenance of health through the equilibrium of the three fundamental biological humors (*Tridosha*): *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* [1]. Among the five principal bio-purification procedures collectively known as *Panchakarma*, *Virechana Karma* (therapeutic purgation) holds a pivotal position for the management of disorders predominantly caused by vitiated *Pitta dosha* [2].

The term "*Virechana*" is derived from the Sanskrit root "*Virech*," meaning to expel or purify, specifically referring to the elimination of morbid substances through the lower gastrointestinal tract [3].

The classical *Ayurvedic* texts, particularly the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, elaborate extensively on the theoretical framework, indications, contraindications, and procedural details of *Virechana Karma* [4]. According to the *Charaka Samhita Sutra Sthana*, *Virechana* is indicated in

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various conditions including skin diseases (*Kushtha*), metabolic disorders (*Prameha*), liver dysfunction (*Yakrit Vikara*), and digestive impairments (*Agnimandya*) [5]. The procedure is believed to cleanse the *Pittashaya* (seat of *Pitta*), specifically the stomach, small intestine, liver, and gallbladder, thereby restoring the homeostatic balance of the body [6].



1.2 Concept of Virechaka Yoga

Virechaka Yoga refers to the various pharmacological formulations employed to induce therapeutic purgation. The *Charaka Samhita Kalpa Sthana* provides detailed descriptions of numerous *Virechaka* formulations, categorized based on their potency (*Mridu*-moderate, *Madhya*-intermediate, and *Teekshna*-strong) and the predominant *dosha* they target [7]. These formulations are meticulously prepared using specific ingredients in precise proportions to achieve the desired therapeutic effect while minimizing adverse reactions.

The selection of *Virechaka* drugs follows a sophisticated understanding of their pharmacological properties, including *Virya* (potency), *Vipaka* (post-digestive taste), and *Prabhava* (unique therapeutic action) [8]. The ideal *Virechaka* drug should possess *Tikta* (bitter) and *Katu* (pungent) *rasa*, *Ushna Virya* (hot potency), and *Vata-Anulomana* (directional movement) properties to facilitate the expulsion of vitiated *Pitta* and associated morbid substances [9].

1.3 Historical Context of Aragwadhadi Avaleha

Aragwadhadi Avaleha finds its classical documentation in the *Charaka Samhita Kalpa Sthana*, specifically in the eighth chapter titled "*Chaturangula Kalpa Adhyaya*" [10]. This chapter is dedicated to the pharmaceutical preparations of *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.), also known as "*Chaturangula*" due to its four-angled stem structure. The text describes twelve distinct purgative recipes utilizing various parts of the *Aragwadha* plant, including its fruits, leaves, bark, and flowers [11].

The preparation of *Aragwadhadi Avaleha* represents a sophisticated integration of three complementary

ingredients: *Aragwadha* as the primary purgative drug, *Trivrut* as a supporting *Virechaka* agent, and *Guda* as a vehicle and adjuvant. This combination exemplifies the *Ayurvedic* principle of "*Yogavahi*" – the synergistic enhancement of therapeutic efficacy through judicious formulation [12].

1.4 Scope and Objectives of the Review

This comprehensive review aims to:

1. Provide detailed drug profiles of the three constituent ingredients: *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula*), *Trivrut* (*Operculina turpethum*), and *Guda* (jaggery)
2. Analyze the classical preparation methodology of *Aragwadhadi Avaleha* as documented in the *Charaka Samhita*.
3. Evaluate the therapeutic indications and clinical applications based on classical and contemporary evidence
4. Discuss the pharmacological mechanisms underlying the efficacy of this *Virechaka Yoga*.
5. Identify areas for future research and clinical validation

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Drug Review: *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.)

2.1.1 Botanical Profile

Synonyms: *Aragwadha*, *Chaturangula*, *Suvarnaka*, *Rajataru*, *Kritamala*, *Karnikara* [13]

Botanical Name: *Cassia fistula* Linn.

Family: *Caesalpiniaceae* (*Leguminosae*)

Distribution: *Cassia fistula* is widely distributed throughout India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and various Southeast Asian countries. The tree is commonly known as the "Indian Laburnum" or "Golden Shower" due to its profuse clusters of bright yellow flowers [14].

Morphological Characteristics: *Cassia fistula* is a moderate-sized deciduous tree, attaining a height of 10-20 meters. The bark is smooth, pale green to greyish-brown. The leaves are compound, with 3-8 pairs of leaflets that are ovate or oblong in shape. The flowers are bright yellow, arranged in pendulous racemes. The fruit is a cylindrical pod, 30-60 cm long, containing 25-100 seeds embedded in a dark brown, sticky, sweetish pulp [15].

Figure 1: *Cassia fistula* (*Aragwadha*) - The Golden Shower Tree.

2.1.2 Ayurvedic Properties

Rasa (Taste): *Madhura* (sweet), *Tikta* (bitter), *Kashaya* (astringent)

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Guna (Qualities): *Guru* (heavy), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Mridu* (soft)

Virya (Potency): *Sheeta* (cold)

Vipaka (post-digestive effect): *Madhura* (sweet)

Prabhava (Unique action): *Virechaka* (purgative), *Kushthahara* (anti-dermatitic)

Dosha Karma: *Tridosahara*, specifically effective in *Pittaja* and *Kaphaja* conditions.

The *Sheeta Virya* pacifies aggravated *Pitta*, while the *Snigdha Guna* helps in *Vata* regulation [16].

2.1.3 Phytochemical Constituents

Modern phytochemical investigations of *Cassia fistula* have revealed a rich diversity of bioactive compounds that contribute to its therapeutic efficacy:

Fruit Pulp Constituents: - **Anthraquinone glycosides:** Rhein, aloe-emodin, chrysophanol, physicon, and sennosides A and B. These compounds are primarily responsible for the laxative and purgative properties [17]. - **Flavonoids:** Kaempferol, quercetin, and their glycosides, exhibiting antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities [18]. - **Tannins:** Gallic acid, ellagic acid, and catechin derivatives, contributing to astringent and antimicrobial properties [19]. - **Saponins:** Fistulosaponins with demonstrated bioactive potential [20]. - **Carbohydrates:** Reducing sugars, gum, and mucilage, providing bulk-forming laxative effects [21].

Bark and Leaf Constituents: - Lupeol, β -sitosterol, and various triterpenoids - Phenolic compounds with antioxidant properties - Essential oils in trace amounts

The hydroalcoholic extracts of *C. fistula* fruit pulp contain tannins, flavonoids, saponins, triterpenoids, steroids, glycosides, and anthraquinones, while chloroform extracts contain glycosides, phenolic compounds, tannins, and anthraquinone-type compounds in higher amounts [22].

2.1.4 Pharmacological Activities

Laxative and Purgative Activity: The anthraquinone glycosides present in the fruit pulp, particularly sennosides A and B, undergo bacterial metabolism in the colon to release active aglycones (rhein and aloe-emodin). These compounds stimulate the Auerbach's plexus, increasing peristaltic movements while inhibiting water and electrolyte absorption in the large intestine, resulting in a dose-dependent laxative effect [23]. Clinical studies have demonstrated that *Cassia fistula* extract produces a mild-to-moderate laxative effect, making it suitable for chronic constipation management without causing severe electrolyte imbalance [24].

Antimicrobial Activity: Research has demonstrated significant antibacterial activity of *C. fistula* extracts against both Gram-positive (*Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus pyogenes*) and Gram-negative (*Escherichia coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*) bacteria. The growth inhibition zones range from 10–20 mm for sensitive bacteria and 12–21 mm for fungal strains including *Aspergillus niger*, *Aspergillus clavatus*, and *Candida albicans* [25]. This antimicrobial activity is attributed to the presence of tannins, flavonoids, and anthraquinones.

Anti-inflammatory Activity: The ethanolic extracts of *C. fistula* bark and leaves have shown significant anti-inflammatory activity in animal models, comparable to standard non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. The mechanism involves inhibition of prostaglandin synthesis and reduction of inflammatory mediators [26].

Hepatoprotective Activity: Studies have demonstrated that *C. fistula* leaf extracts exhibit hepatoprotective effects against carbon tetrachloride-induced liver damage in experimental animals, evidenced by reduced serum transaminase levels and histopathological improvement [27].

Wound Healing Activity: The mucilage and polysaccharide components of the fruit pulp promote wound healing by enhancing collagen synthesis, re-epithelialization, and neovascularization [28].

2.2 Drug Review: *Trivrut* (*Operculina turpethum* Linn.)

2.2.1 Botanical Profile

Synonyms: *Trivrut*, *Nishottar*, *Shyama*, *Aruna*, *Triputa*, *Suvaha*, *Kumbhini*, *Mahashana* [29]

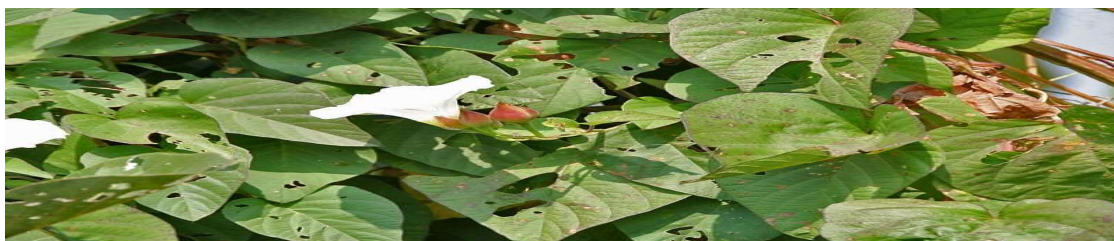
Botanical Name: *Operculina turpethum* (Linn.) Silva Manso

Family: Convolvulaceae

Distribution: *Operculina turpethum* is found throughout India, particularly in the tropical and subtropical regions, growing up to 1,000 meters above sea level. It is also distributed in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and other Southeast Asian countries [30].

Morphological Characteristics: It is a large, woody, climbing shrub with milky latex. The stems are terete, stout, and often twisted. The leaves are alternate, broadly ovate-cordate, 7-15 cm long, and 5-12 cm wide, with a smooth margin. The flowers are white, large, and solitary, occurring in the leaf axils. The fruit is a globose capsule with persistent sepals. The root is woody, tuberous, 15-30 cm long, and 2-5 cm in diameter, with a brownish-grey outer surface and white internal portion [31].

Figure 2: *Operculina turpethum* (Trivrut) -



Traditional Purgative Herb.

2.2.2 Ayurvedic Properties *Rasa*

(Taste): *Tikta* (bitter)

Guna (Qualities): *Laghu* (light), *Ruksha* (dry)

Virya (Potency): *Ushna* (hot)

Vipaka (post-digestive effect): *Katu* (pungent)

Prabhava (Unique action): *Virechaka* (purgative), *Shulapranut* (relieves colic), *Krimighna* (anthelmintic)

Dosha Karma: *Kaphavatahara*, *Pittashamaka*. The *Ushna Virya* and *Katu Vipaka* make it particularly effective in *Kaphaja* and *Vataja* conditions [32].

2.2.3 Phytochemical Constituents

Comprehensive phytochemical analysis of *Operculina turpethum* has identified numerous bioactive compounds:

Root Constituents: - **Resinous glycosides:** Turpethin (α - and β -turpethin), turpethinic acids (A, B, C, D, and E) - these are the principal purgative constituents [33]. - **Coumarins:** Scopoletin, exhibiting anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties [34]. - **Sterols:** β -sitosterol, β -sitosterol- β -D-glucoside, 22,23-dihydro- β -spinosterol- β -D-glucoside, and stigma-5,22-dien-3-O- β -D-glucopyranoside [35]. - **Triterpenoids:** Cycloartenol, lanosta-5-ene, 24-methylene- β -5-lanosterol, lupeol, and betulin [36]. - **Saponins:** Four new dammarane-type saponins called operculinosides A-D (1-4) isolated from aerial parts [37]. - **Phenolic compounds:** Salicylic acid, acrylamide derivatives [38]. - **Sugars:** α - and β -rhamnose, glucose, and fructose [39].

2.2.4 Pharmacological Activities

Laxative and Purgative Activity: *Trivrut* is regarded as the most effective drug for *Sukha virechana* (comfortable purgation) in classical *Ayurvedic* texts. The resinous glycosides, particularly turpethin, stimulate the intestinal mucosa and promote bowel evacuation without causing excessive griping or dehydration [40]. The laxative effect is mild-to-moderate, making it suitable for regular therapeutic use.

Hepatoprotective Activity: Multiple studies have demonstrated the hepatoprotective effects of *O. turpethum* against various hepatotoxic agents including carbon tetrachloride, paracetamol, and ethanol. The mechanism involves antioxidant activity, reduction of lipid peroxidation, and

restoration of hepatic enzyme levels [41].

Anti-inflammatory and Analgesic Activity: The methanolic extracts of *O. turpethum* leaves have shown significant anti-inflammatory activity in carrageenan-induced paw edema models and analgesic activity in acetic acid-induced writhing tests. These effects are attributed to the inhibition of prostaglandin synthesis and modulation of inflammatory cytokines [42].

Antioxidant Activity: The plant extracts exhibit strong free radical scavenging activity, as evidenced by DPPH radical scavenging assays and reducing power tests. The antioxidant capacity is attributed to the presence of phenolic compounds, flavonoids, and ascorbic acid [43].

Antidiabetic Activity: Studies have demonstrated that *O. turpethum* root extracts possess significant antihyperglycemic activity in alloxan-induced diabetic rats, with effects comparable to standard antidiabetic drugs. The mechanism involves enhancement of insulin sensitivity and inhibition of α -glucosidase enzyme [44].

Anticancer/Cytotoxic Activity: In vitro studies have shown cytotoxic effects of *O. turpethum* extracts against various cancer cell lines, attributed to the presence of turpethinic acids and other bioactive compounds [45].

2.3 Drug Review: *Guda* (Jaggery)

2.3.1 Definition and Types

Synonyms: *Guda*, *Guda Sharkara*, *Ikshu*, *Phanita*, *Matsyandika*

Definition: *Guda* is the non-centrifugal sugar obtained from sugarcane juice (*Saccharum officinarum* L.) or palm sap through traditional preparation methods. It is an unrefined, natural sweetener that retains the molasses content and mineral nutrients of the original plant source [46].

Types based on preparation: - **Navina Guda:** Freshly prepared jaggery (within one year) - **Purana Guda:** Old jaggery (more than one year), considered more digestible and therapeutically potent [47]

Types based on source: - *Ikshu Guda* (sugarcane jaggery) - *Khajuri Guda* (date palm jaggery) - *Tala Guda* (palm jaggery)

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Figure 3: Jaggedy (Guda) - Traditional Sweetener with Therapeutic Properties.

Ayurvedic Properties:

Rasa (Taste): Madhura (sweet)

Guna (Qualities): Snigdha (unctuous), Guru (heavy)

Virya (Potency): Ushna (hot)

Vipaka (Post-digestive effect): Madhura (sweet)

Prabhava (Unique action): Deepana (digestive stimulant), Pachana (carminative), Anulomana (promotes proper direction of Vata)

Dosha Karma: Vatapittahara, specifically pacifies Vata and aggravates Kapha in excess. The Ushna Virya helps in digestion and metabolism [48].

2.3.2 Nutritional Composition

Modern nutritional analysis has revealed that jaggedy is a rich source of essential nutrients:

Macronutrients: - Carbohydrates: 90-95% (predominantly sucrose, with glucose and fructose) - Protein: 0.4-0.5% - Fat: 0.1%

Micronutrients (per 100g): - Iron: 10-15 mg - Calcium: 40-80 mg - Phosphorus: 20-30 mg - Magnesium: 20-30 mg - Potassium: 100-150 mg - Sodium: 20-30 mg - Manganese: 0.2-0.4 mg - Copper: 0.1-0.2 mg - Zinc: 0.2-0.4 mg [49]

Vitamins: - Vitamin A (β -carotene) - B-complex vitamins (thiamine, riboflavin, niacin) - Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) - Folic acid

2.3.3 Therapeutic Properties

Digestive Stimulant: According to Ayurvedic texts, jaggedy acts as a Deepana (appetizer) and Pachana (digestive) due to its Ushna Virya. It stimulates the secretion of digestive enzymes and enhances gastrointestinal motility [50].

Blood Purification: The iron content of jaggedy makes it beneficial in the management of anemia (Pandu) and helps in blood purification. It is traditionally used as an adjuvant in various blood-purifying formulations [51].

Respiratory Health: Jaggedy is traditionally used in respiratory conditions, particularly in cough and

cold, due to its expectorant and warming properties [52].

Liver Health: The antioxidant compounds in jaggedy, particularly polyphenols, exhibit hepatoprotective effects and support liver detoxification processes [53].

Energy Booster: The complex carbohydrate structure of jaggedy provides sustained energy release compared to refined sugar, making it beneficial for maintaining energy levels [54].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Classical Description of *Aragwadhadi Avaleha*

The classical description of *Aragwadhadi Avaleha* is documented in the *Charaka Samhita Kalpa Sthana*, specifically in the eighth chapter titled "*Chaturangula Kalpa Adhyaya*" [55]. This chapter systematically describes twelve different pharmaceutical preparations using *Aragwadha* as the primary ingredient. The eighth preparation in this sequence is the *Aragwadhadi Avaleha*, which is specifically designed as a palatable and effective *Virechaka* formulation [56].

3.1.1 Classical Reference (*Charaka Samhita Kalpa Sthana* 8, Shloka 12)

The classical text describes the preparation method as follows:

"Aragwadhadi Avaleha: Aragwadha kwatha, Trivrut churna, and Guda are cooked together over mild fire to prepare the linctus (avaleha). This linctus is taken in appropriate dose for purgation." [57]

Translation: The linctus (*avaleha*) is prepared of the decoction of *Aragwadha* added with the powder of *Trivrut* and Jaggedy, by cooking over mild fire. This linctus is taken in appropriate dose for purgation.

3.1.2 Ingredients and Proportions

The traditional preparation of *Aragwadhadi Avaleha* involves the following ingredients in specific proportions:

Ingredient	Botanical/Scientific Name	Part Used	Quantity
<i>Aragwadha Kwatha</i>	Cassia fistula Linn.	Fruit pulp/whole plant decoction	1 part (reduced from 16 parts of water)
<i>Trivrut Churna</i>	Operculina turpethum Linn.	Root powder	1 part
<i>Guda</i>	Saccharum officinarum Linn.	Non-centrifugal sugar	2-3 parts

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		(jaggery)	
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Table 1: Ingredients of Aragwadhadi Avaleha

3.1.3 Preparation Methodology

The classical preparation of *Aragwadhadi Avaleha* follows a systematic procedure:

Step 1: Preparation of Aragwadha Decoction (Kwatha) - Take coarse powder of Aragwadha fruit pulp or whole plant material - Add 16 parts of water - Boil until the volume reduces to one-fourth (4 parts) - Strain the decoction through a clean cloth to obtain the filtered Kwatha [58]

Step 2: Addition of Trivrut Powder - Add fine powder of Trivrut root to the filtered decoction - Mix thoroughly to ensure uniform distribution [59]

Step 3: Addition of Jaggery - Add jaggery (*Guda*) in the specified proportion - The jaggery should be free from impurities and properly powdered or melted [60]

Step 4: Cooking (Siddhi) - Transfer the mixture to a stainless steel or copper vessel - Cook over mild fire (*Mridvagni*) with continuous stirring - Continue heating until the mixture attains the consistency of a linctus (*avaleha*) - The preparation is considered ready when it achieves the following characteristics: - Thick, semi-solid consistency - non-sticky to touch - Forms a thread (*Tantu*) when dropped in water - Uniform color and texture [61]

Step 5: Storage - Transfer the prepared *avaleha* to a clean, dry glass or ceramic container - Store in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight - The shelf life is approximately 6-12 months under proper storage conditions [62]

3.2 Quality Control Parameters

The classical texts specify certain quality control parameters for the prepared *Aragwadhadi Avaleha*:

Organoleptic Characteristics: - **Color:** Dark brown to blackish-brown - **Odor:** Characteristic sweet-medicinal odor - **Taste:** Sweet with slight bitter undertone - **Texture:** Smooth, semi-solid, non-gritty [63]

Physicochemical Parameters: - **pH:** 4.5-5.5 (acidic nature) - **Total solids:** Not less than 70% - **Sugar content:** 50-60% - **Moisture content:** Not more than 25% [64]

3.3 Dosage and Administration

Table 2: Virechana Karma Treatment Protocol

Procedure	Medicine	Dose	Duration
Deepana-Pachana	Trikatu Churna	3 g twice daily	3 days

<i>Abhyantar Snehapana</i>	<i>Panchatikta Ghrita</i>	Increasing dose as per classical guidelines	5 days
<i>Bahya Snehana</i>	<i>Sarvanga Abhyanga with medicated oil</i>	As per classical method	2 days
<i>Swedana</i>	<i>Bashpa Swedana</i>	As per classical procedure	2 days
<i>Pradhana Karma (Virechana)</i>	<i>Aragwadha di Avaleha</i>	80 g single dose	Day of procedure
<i>Virechanopaga Dravya</i>	<i>Ushna Jala</i>	As required	During procedure
<i>Paschat Karma</i>	<i>Sansarjana Krama</i>	As per Shuddhi	6 days

4. Conclusion

Aragwadhadi Avaleha represents a well-formulated *Virechaka Yoga* that effectively combines the therapeutic benefits of three potent ingredients: *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula*), *Trivrut* (*Operculina turpethum*), and *Guda* (jaggery). The classical preparation method, as documented in the *Charaka Samhita Kalpa Sthana* 8, ensures optimal extraction and preservation of the bioactive compounds while maintaining palatability and patient compliance.

The pharmacological evidence supports the traditional uses of this formulation, with documented laxative, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, hepatoprotective, and immunomodulatory activities. The mild-to-moderate potency of the formulation makes it suitable for regular therapeutic use in the management of chronic conditions such as skin diseases, digestive disorders, and metabolic syndromes.

The inclusion of jaggery as a vehicle not only enhances the palatability of the formulation but also provides nutritional support and digestive stimulant properties. This reflects the sophisticated understanding of formulation science in classical *Ayurveda*, where therapeutic efficacy is balanced with patient acceptability.

Future research should focus on: 1. Standardization of the preparation method with quality control parameters 2. Clinical trials to establish efficacy in specific disease conditions 3. Pharmacokinetic studies

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to understand the absorption and metabolism of active compounds 4. Safety studies in special populations including elderly and pediatric patients 5. Comparative studies with conventional laxatives and purgatives

In conclusion, *Aragwadhadi Avaleha* stands as a valuable therapeutic formulation in *Ayurvedic* medicine, offering a safe and effective approach to therapeutic purgation. Its integration into contemporary integrative medicine practices could provide additional treatment options for patients with chronic digestive, dermatological, and metabolic disorders.

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