



Review Article

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SARVANGA TVAGADI ALEPA: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF TRADITIONAL AYURVEDIC FORMULATION

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ABSTRACT

Traditional knowledge preserved through folklore has served as an invaluable source of healthcare practices since ancient times. Similar to Ayurveda, folklore medicine emphasizes both the prevention and management of diseases using locally available medicinal plants and formulations. Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa is one such traditional Ayurvedic polyherbal external lepa (medicated herbal paste) practiced by a folklore practitioner for the management of Ama (metabolic toxins/undigested metabolites)-associated Vata (functional principle governing movement) disorders, particularly inflammatory musculoskeletal conditions. The ingredients predominantly possess Katu (pungent), Tikta (bitter), and Kashaya (astringent) Rasa (taste), Ushna Veerya (hot potency), and Kapha-Vatahara (pacifies Kapha and Vata) properties, which facilitate Ama Pachana (digestion and elimination of metabolic toxins) and contribute to the alleviation of pain, swelling and stiffness. Published pharmacological studies have also demonstrated anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, analgesic, immunomodulatory and anti-arthritis activities of the individual ingredients, providing scientific support for their traditional use. This review critically compiles the classical Ayurvedic concepts, phytochemical constituents, pharmacological evidence, and therapeutic rationale of Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa, while highlighting the need for further analytical, pharmacological and multicentric clinical studies to establish its quality, safety, mechanism of action and therapeutic efficacy.

Keywords: Ama, Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa, Traditional medicine.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has always acknowledged the importance of folklore knowledge in healthcare. Classical texts acknowledge that communities living close to nature, such as goat-herders, shepherds, cowherds, and forest-dwellers, possess practical knowledge of medicinal plants gained through generations of observation and experience¹. This traditional folklore knowledge has contributed to the discovery and continued use of many herbal remedies, some of which remain widely practiced despite limited scientific documentation. One such unique treatment for Sama Vata Vikara (disorders caused by aggravated Vata Dosha) has been practiced by a folklore practitioner. Recognizing the potential therapeutic value of this traditional formulation, the Folklore Research Centre of SDM College of Ayurveda undertook efforts to evaluate its efficacy scientifically. The formulation employed in this treatment was designated as Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa and was selected for clinical evaluation in the management of Ama. In traditional practice, the ingredients are processed into a fine powder and mixed with suitable liquid media such as Dhanyamla (fermented sour liquid) to prepare a paste for external application (Lepa). The ingredients predominantly possess Katu-Tikta Rasa (pungent and bitter taste), Ushna Veerya (hot potency), Laghu-Ruksha Guna (light and dry qualities), and Kapha-Vatahara (pacifies Kapha and Vata) properties, supporting the elimination of Ama (metabolic toxins) and reducing swelling and pain.

To review and critically analyze Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa drug with reference to its therapeutic role in the management of Ama condition based on the properties and actions of its ingredients described in classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary scientific literature.

Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa

Table 1 presents the ingredients of Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa, along with their botanical names, plant families, and parts used.

Rasa Panchaka of the Ingredients

The Ayurvedic properties of the ingredients, including Rasa (taste), Guna (qualities), Veerya (potency), Vipaka (post-digestive effect), Doshagnata (effect on Doshas), and Karma (therapeutic actions), are summarized in Table 2.

Phytochemical Constituents and Pharmacological Activities

The major phytochemical constituents and reported pharmacological activities of the ingredients are summarized in Table 3.

Properties of Dhanyamla

Table 4 presents the classical properties of Dhanyamla described in different Ayurvedic texts.

Table 1: Description of contents of Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa

Drugs	Botanical Name	Family	Part used
Tvak	<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i>	Lauraceae	Leaf
Nirgundi	<i>Vitex negundo</i>	Verbenaceae	Leaf
Agnimantha	<i>Premna integrifolia</i>	Verbenaceae	Leaf
Chincha	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	Leaf
Nagadanti	<i>Croton oblongifolius</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf
Dronapushpi	<i>Leucas indica</i>	Lamiaceae	Whole plant
Lashuna	<i>Allium sativum</i>	Liliaceae	Bulb
Sarshapa	<i>Brassica campestris</i>	Cruciferae	Seed
Shikakai	<i>Acacia concinna</i>	Mimosaceae	Pod

Table 2: Rasa Panchaka of contents of Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa

Sanskrit/Vernacular Name	Rasa	Guna	Veerya	Vipaka	Doshaghna	Karma
Tvak ²	Madhura Katu Tikta	Tikshna laghu pichila	Ushna	Katu	Kapha vatahara	Ruchya
Nirgundi ³	Katu Tikta	Laghu ruksha	Ushna	Katu	Vata kapha hara	Chakshushya, keshya, vranaropana, krimighna
Agnimantha ⁴	Tikta katu Kashaya Madhura	Ruksha laghu	Ushna	Katu	Kapha vatahara	Shothahara deepana
Chincha ⁵	Madhura amla	Guru ruksha	Ushna	Amla	kapha vatahara	Deepana
Nagadanti ⁶	Katu	Guru Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	kapha pittahara	Vishaghna, shothahara, medhya
Dronapushpi ⁷	Katu	Guru ruksha	Ushna	Katu	Kapha vatahara	Jvarahara, deepana
Lashuna ⁸	Madhura Lavana Katu Tikta Kashaya	Snigdha guru Tikshna sara	Ushna	Katu	Vatakapahara	Balya, brahmana, rasayan, vrshya, netrya
Sarshapa ⁹	Katu Tikta	Laghu Snigdha	Ushna	Katu	Kapha vatahara	Vidahi, vamaka
Shikakai ¹⁰	Tikta Kashaya	Laghu	Sheeta	Katu	Kapha pittahara	Jwarahara shophahara vranahara

Table 3: Chemical constituents and pharmacological study on contents of Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa

Drugs	Chemical Constituents	Pharmacological Study
Tvak ¹¹	Eugenol (major constituent), Cinnamyl acetate, Cinnamaldehyde, Trans-cinnamic acid, Catechin, Epicatechin, Kaempferol, Phlorizin, 4-Hydroxybenzoic acid Gallic acid	The study demonstrated that <i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i> (true cinnamon) leaf possesses significant anti-inflammatory, cytotoxic, and antilipidemic activities. Ethanol leaf extract showed stronger biological activity than dichloromethane:methanol extract, exhibiting effective nitric oxide scavenging, cholesterol esterase inhibition, GST inhibition, and growth inhibition against MCF-7, HepG2, and AN3CA cancer cell lines. The findings suggest that cinnamon leaves may serve as a valuable source of natural therapeutic agents for managing inflammation, hyperlipidemia, and cancer-related conditions.
Nirgundi ¹²	Casticin, vitexin, luteolin, negundoside, aucubin, ursolic acid, betulinic acid, sabinene, limonene, and α -pinene.	The study demonstrated that the aqueous extract of <i>Vitex negundo</i> Linn. (Nirgundi) leaves possesses significant anti-arthritis activity in formalin-induced arthritis in rats. The aqueous extract showed 56.75% inhibition of paw edema, which was comparable to the standard drug diclofenac sodium (71.89%). The petroleum ether extract exhibited moderate activity. The anti-arthritis effect is attributed to the presence of bioactive phytoconstituents, particularly alkaloids and saponins, which are known for their anti-inflammatory and anti-arthritis properties. The findings support the traditional use of <i>Vitex negundo</i> in the management of joint pain and inflammatory disorders.
Agni Mantha ¹³	Flavonoids, phenolic compounds, iridoid glycosides, alkaloids, diterpenes, acteoside (verbascoside), luteolin, premnazole, 4-hydroxy-E-globularinin, 10-O-trans-p-coumaroylcatalpol, premnadimer, amino acids, carbohydrates, and vitamins.	<i>Premna integrifolia</i> (Agnimantha), an important constituent of Daśamūla, possesses a wide range of pharmacological activities including analgesic, anti-inflammatory, anti-arthritis, antimicrobial, antioxidant, hepatoprotective, hypoglycemic, immunomodulatory, cardioprotective, anti-obesity, antiulcer, anticancer, neuroprotective and longevity-promoting effects. Most studies utilized methanolic and ethanolic extracts of leaves and roots, indicating that the plant's therapeutic potential is largely attributable to its rich phytochemical composition.

Chincha ¹⁴	Tannins, saponins, glycosides, flavonoids, polyphenols, steroids, and carbohydrates, catechin, epicatechin, procyanidin B2, apigenin, anthocyanins, taxifolin, eriodictyol, naringenin, tartaric acid, pectin, mucilage, arabinose, xylose, galactose, glucose, uronic acid, and triterpenes.	The study demonstrated that the hydroethanolic extract of <i>Tamarindus indica</i> leaves possesses significant anti-inflammatory and antinociceptive (analgesic) activities in experimental animal models. The extract effectively reduced carrageenan-induced paw edema, inhibited acetic acid-induced writhing, increased pain reaction time in hot plate and tail-flick tests, and showed membrane-stabilizing activity. These effects may be attributed to its rich content of flavonoids and polyphenols, which are believed to inhibit inflammatory mediators such as prostaglandins, nitric oxide, and TNF- α . The findings scientifically support the traditional use of <i>T. indica</i> leaves in the management of pain and inflammatory disorders.
Nagadanti ¹⁵	Alkaloids, α -amino acids, flavonoids, glycosides, phenolic compounds, saponins, steroids, tannins, and terpenoids, crocotoembraneic acid, neocrocotoembraneic acid, poilaneic acid, crocotoembranol, neocrocotoembranol and poilaneol	<i>Croton oblongifolius</i> Roxb leaves demonstrated significant in vitro anti-arthritis activity, particularly in the ethanol extract, which showed greater inhibition of protein denaturation compared to the aqueous extract. The ethanol extract exhibited activity comparable to diclofenac potassium at 500 μ g/mL, indicating its potential as a natural anti-arthritis agent. Preliminary toxicity studies revealed relatively low cytotoxicity, supporting its safety for further pharmacological investigation.
Dronapushpi ¹⁶	β -Sitosterol, Stigmasterol, Lupeol, Oleanolic acid, Laballenic acid	Studies demonstrated that the dichloromethane extract of <i>Leucas cephalotes</i> (Dronapushpi) possesses significant anti-inflammatory activity by inhibiting the production of pro-inflammatory mediators such as nitric oxide (NO), TNF- α , and IL-1 β in both in vitro and in vivo models. The isolated compounds, particularly oleanolic acid and laballenic acid, showed notable inhibition of inflammatory cytokines. The extract also significantly reduced TNF- α and IL-1 β levels in LPS-induced rats, suggesting that <i>Leucas cephalotes</i> may be a promising source of anti-inflammatory agents useful in inflammatory disorders.
Lashuna ¹⁷	Allicin, Alliin, Organosulfur compounds (OSCs), S-allyl cysteine (SAC), S-allyl mercaptocysteine (SAMC), Diallyl sulfide (DAS), Diallyl disulfide (DADS), Diallyl trisulfide (DATS)	<i>Allium sativum</i> (Garlic) is an important medicinal plant possessing a wide range of pharmacological activities including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, immunomodulatory, antidiabetic, antihypertensive, hepatoprotective, antiviral, anticancer, and anti-arthritis effects. These therapeutic properties are mainly attributed to its sulfur-containing bioactive compounds.
Sarshapa ¹⁸	Glucosinolates (sinigrin, gluconapin, glucobrassicin, glucosinalbin, epiprogoitrin), Isothiocyanates (hydrolysis products of glucosinolates), Polyphenols (sinapine, flavonoids, phenolic acids, anthocyanins), Lignans (pinoresinol, lariciresinol), Condensed tannins, Vitamins (tocopherols, carotenoids), Fatty acids (Oleic acid, Linoleic acid, Linolenic acid, Palmitic acid), Myrosinase enzyme	Mustard (<i>Brassica campestris</i>) is an important medicinal plant with significant antioxidant, anticancer, anti-inflammatory, antidiabetic, antibacterial, and antiepileptic activities. The therapeutic effects are mainly attributed to its rich phytochemical profile, particularly glucosinolates and their hydrolysis products such as isothiocyanates, erucin, and indole-3-carbinol. These compounds exhibit chemoprotective and anticancer properties by inhibiting tumor growth and promoting detoxification. The seeds are especially valuable as they contain bioactive oils and phenolic compounds that contribute to various pharmacological actions.
Shikakai ¹⁹	Phenolic compounds, flavonoids, saponins, alkaloids and tannins	The study concluded that <i>Acacia concinna</i> (Shikakai) pod extracts possess significant antioxidant and antityrosinase activities due to the presence of phenolic compounds and flavonoids. Among the tested extracts, the spray-dried hydroethanolic extract (HES) showed the highest biological activity and phenolic content. The extract also demonstrated a safety profile comparable to ascorbic acid in cytotoxicity studies.

Table 4: Dhanyamla properties as per different references

Reference	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka	Doshaghna	Karma
Sahasra yoga ²⁰	-	-	-	-	Vatahara	-
Sushruta Samhita ²¹	-	Laghu Teekshna	-	-	Vata kaphahara	Jeevana, Dahanashana Trushnahara Deepana Jarana Bhedana Asthapana
Ashtanga Hridaya ²²	-	Teekshna Ushna Laghu	Ushna	-	Pittakrut, Vata kaphahara	Bhedana Shramahara Klamahara Ruchyam Deepana Bastishoolanut Hrudyā

Method of preparation of Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa

Fresh leaves of Agnimantha, Chincha, Nirgundi, Tvak, and Nagadanti/Somavara (local name), along with the Panchanga (whole plant) of Dronapushpi, were collected, thoroughly washed, shade-dried, and powdered separately. In addition, dried Shikakai pods were powdered separately. The dried powders of all ingredients were then mixed in equal proportions to obtain a homogeneous formulation and packed in airtight sachets for further use.

The prepared Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa powder was mixed with an equal quantity of Lashuna (garlic) bulb and Sarshapa (mustard) seed. Dhanyamla (fermented sour liquid) was gradually added to

the mixture and triturated thoroughly to obtain a homogeneous Kalka (herbal paste). The prepared Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa paste was then applied externally.

Lepana (external application of herbal paste): Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa acts as Doshaghna Lepa (paste that alleviates aggravated Doshas)²³. According to Sharngadhara, Doshaghna Lepa should be applied to a thickness of ¼ Angula (approximately 0.5 cm)²⁴. The Lepa application technique involves spreading the preparation in the Pratiloma Gati (opposite the direction of hair growth). This facilitates drug absorption through the skin via the Romakupa (hair follicles), Sweda-Vahini (sweat ducts), and Siramukha (terminal openings of blood vessels)²⁵. Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa serves as an effective external therapeutic

formulation for reducing pain and joint swelling associated with Ama.

DISCUSSION

Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa is a unique traditional Ayurvedic polyherbal formulation used as an external lepa (medicated herbal paste) to manage inflammatory musculoskeletal disorders associated with Ama (metabolic toxins/undigested metabolites) and aggravated Vata Dosha. Although the formulation originated in folklore, its therapeutic rationale is strongly supported by both classical Ayurvedic principles and contemporary pharmacological evidence. This review highlights the scientific basis of the formulation by critically analysing the properties of its individual ingredients and their collective therapeutic potential.

From an Ayurvedic perspective, the pathogenesis of Ama-associated disorders involves impaired Agni (digestive and metabolic fire), resulting in the formation of Ama, which combines with aggravated Vata Dosha and localizes in susceptible tissues, particularly joints, leading to pain, swelling, stiffness, tenderness and restriction of movement. Therefore, successful management requires interventions that promote Ama Pachana (digestion and elimination of metabolic toxins), reduce Kapha and Vata predominance, relieve inflammation, and restore normal tissue function. The ingredients of Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa predominantly possess Katu (pungent), Tikta (bitter), and Kashaya (astringent) Rasa (taste), Laghu (light) and Ruksha (dry) Guna (qualities), Ushna Veerya (hot potency), and Katu Vipaka (pungent post-digestive effect). These properties antagonize the Guru (heavy), Snigdha (unctuous), and Picchila (slimy) qualities of Ama, thereby facilitating its digestion and clearance while reducing Kapha-Vata aggravation.

Most constituent herbs have complementary pharmacodynamic actions that may contribute synergistically to the formulation's overall therapeutic effect. *Vitex negundo*, *Premna integrifolia*, *Leucas cephalotes*, and *Allium sativum* are traditionally recognized for their Shothahara (anti-inflammatory) and Vedanasthapana (analgesic) properties. *Brassica campestris* and *Allium sativum*, owing to their Ushna (hot) and Tikshna (penetrating) properties, enhance local circulation, reduce stiffness and facilitate the dispersion of accumulated morbid factors. *Cinnamomum zeylanicum* contributes additional Deepana (enhancement of digestive and metabolic activity) and Kapha-Vatahara (pacifies Kapha and Vata) actions, whereas *Tamarindus indica* and *Croton oblongifolius* provide significant anti-inflammatory support. Rather than acting independently, these herbs appear to function through complementary mechanisms, producing a synergistic therapeutic effect greater than that of the individual ingredients.

Modern pharmacological investigations further support these classical concepts. *Cinnamomum zeylanicum* contains eugenol, cinnamaldehyde, catechin, epicatechin, and other polyphenolic compounds exhibiting potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities. *Vitex negundo* contains casticin, vitexin, luteolin, ursolic acid, and betulinic acid, which inhibit inflammatory mediators and demonstrate significant anti-arthritis activity in experimental studies. *Premna integrifolia* possesses flavonoids, iridoid glycosides, and phenolic compounds that exhibit analgesic, antioxidant, immunomodulatory and anti-inflammatory properties. Similarly, *Tamarindus indica* leaves contain flavonoids and polyphenols that can suppress prostaglandin synthesis, nitric oxide production, and pro-inflammatory cytokines such as tumour necrosis factor- α (TNF- α), thereby reducing inflammation and pain.

Experimental studies have also demonstrated the anti-arthritis potential of *Croton oblongifolius*, which inhibits protein denaturation, an important mechanism associated with inflammatory joint disorders. *Leucas cephalotes* contains oleanolic acid, β -sitosterol, and related phytoconstituents that can suppress inflammatory cytokines, including TNF- α and interleukin-1 β (IL-1 β). *Allium sativum* is rich in sulphur-containing compounds such as allicin and S-allyl cysteine that possess antioxidant, immunomodulatory and anti-inflammatory activities. Likewise, glucosinolates and isothiocyanates present in *Brassica campestris* exhibit anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, while the phenolic compounds and flavonoids of *Acacia concinna* contribute additional free radical scavenging activity. Collectively, these phytochemicals may reduce oxidative stress, inhibit inflammatory pathways, protect synovial tissues and minimise progressive joint damage.

An equally important component of the formulation is Dhanyamla (fermented sour liquid), which serves as the processing medium during preparation of the lepa. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe Dhanyamla as possessing Ushna (hot), Tikshna (penetrating), Laghu (light), Deepana (enhances digestive and metabolic activity), and Kapha-Vatahara (pacifies Kapha and Vata) properties. From a pharmaceutical perspective, its mildly acidic nature may facilitate improved extraction and release of phytoconstituents from the herbal ingredients while enhancing their penetration through the skin. External application in the form of Pratiloma Gati (application opposite to the direction of hair growth), as described in Ayurvedic classics, may further promote absorption through hair follicles, sweat ducts, and superficial microchannels of the skin. Consequently, Dhanyamla functions not only as a vehicle but also as an active therapeutic component that may potentiate the overall efficacy of the formulation.

The therapeutic effects of Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa likely result from multiple complementary mechanisms rather than a single pharmacological action. The formulation appears to combine anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antioxidant, immunomodulatory, and circulation-enhancing activities with the Ayurvedic principles of Ama Pachana, Kapha-Vata Shamana (pacification of Kapha and Vata) and Shothahara (anti-inflammatory action). Such a multimodal mechanism is particularly advantageous in inflammatory musculoskeletal disorders, where multiple pathological pathways contribute to disease progression.

CONCLUSION

Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa is a unique folklore polyherbal formulation comprises herbs possessing predominantly Katu, Tikta, and Kashaya Rasa (pungent, bitter, and astringent tastes), Ushna Veerya (hot potency), and Kapha-Vatahara (pacifies Kapha and Vata), Ama-Pachana (digestion and elimination of metabolic toxins), Shothahara (relieves swelling), and Vedanasthapana (pain-relieving) properties, which collectively support its use in conditions associated with Ama (metabolic toxins/undigested metabolites) and aggravated Vata.

Using Dhanyamla (fermented sour liquid) as the medium further strengthens the therapeutic rationale by facilitating external application and promoting Rukshana (drying therapy). The review of classical literature and available scientific evidence indicates that the individual ingredients exhibit anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antioxidant, and antimicrobial activities, which may contribute to the formulation's therapeutic potential. The synergistic combination of these ingredients provides a scientific basis for its traditional use in inflammatory musculoskeletal disorders, particularly Amavata.

Although the formulation has a strong classical and pharmacological rationale, published scientific evidence on Sarvanga Tvagadi Alepa remains limited. Therefore, well-designed analytical, pharmacological, and multicentric clinical studies are needed to further establish its safety, efficacy, quality standards, and mechanism of action. Such evidence may facilitate integrating this valuable folklore formulation into evidence-based Ayurvedic practice.

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