



A REVIEW ARTICLE ON ARAGWADHA (CASSIA FISTULA LINN.)

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient health care tradition that sprouted in the pristine land of India some 5000 years ago. It is based on ancient writings that rely on a natural and holistic approach to physical and mental health. Here the present review study is an attempt to provide reported detail information on the drug from various *Samhitas*. *Aragwadha* has been used in the Ayurvedic system of Medicine for a long period. *Aragwadha* is identified as *Cassia fistula* Linn. and belongs to the Fabaceae family. It is a tree of moderate size, indigenous to India, and often cultivated as an ornamental plant. The property of the drug is immensely praised in *Dhanwantari Nighantu*, *Raja Nighantu*, *Kaiyadeva Nighantu*, *Bhavaprakasa Nighantu*, etc. *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) possesses *Madhura*, *Tikta Rasas*, and *SeetaVirya*, and has *gunaslike Guru* and *Mridu*. It alleviates *Tridosha*. Parts used were Root Bark, Leaf, Flower, and Fruit Pulp. *Parpatamritadi Kashayam*, *Trivritadi Kashayam*, *Maharasnadi Kashayam*, *Rasnasaptakam Kashayam*, *Manjishtadi Kashayam*, *Triphaladi Kashayam*, *Haritakyadi Kashayam*, *Katukamaladi Kashayam*, *Aaviltholaadi Kashayam*, *Aragwadhamrithadi Kashayam*, *Tamizhamadi Kashayam*, *Manasamitra Vatakam* etc are some formulations that contain *Aragwadha* as one ingredient. Furthermore, *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) has got a diverse range of *Karmas*, for which it is used in *Kushta*, *Kandu*, *Vatarakta*, *Gulma*, *Udara*, *Upadamsa*, etc. Various experimental studies of the drug *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) had

also proved its Anti-ulcer, Anti-inflammatory, Wound healing, and Hypolipidemic properties. So, this review paper is an endeavour of the author to provide details of this medicinal plant *Aragwadha* its classical references, synonyms, botanical description, phytochemicals, pharmacological activity, and classical medicinal uses.

Keywords: *Aragwadha*, *Cassia fistula* Linn., *Tridoshanasaka*

INTRODUCTION

Aragwadha (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) is an important drug that is widely used in the Ayurvedic system of medicine. References of *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) are available in Vedic literature and all the main *Samhitas*. *Brihatrayi* has quoted *Aragwadha* extensively in their works. From the descriptions, *Aragwadha* is identified as *Cassia fistula* Linn. and belongs to the Fabaceae family. It is a tree of moderate size, indigenous to India, and often cultivated as an ornamental plant. In the Ayurvedic system of medicine, this tree is used for many ailments. According to The Ayurvedic Pharmacopeia of India, the source plant of *Aragwadha* is *Cassia fistula* Linn.¹

TAXONOMIC POSITION

The botanical name is *Cassia fistula* Linn. belongs to the family Fabaceae and sub-family Caesalpiniaceae. Botanical synonyms include *Cassia rhombifolia* Roxb and *Cathartocarpus fistula*².

TAXONOMICAL CLASSIFICATION

Aragwadha (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) included in the **Kingdom – Plantae, Sub kingdom – Tracheobionta, Super Division – Spermatophyta, Division – Mangoliophyta, Class – Magnoliopsida, Sub Class – Rosidae, Order – Fabales, Family – Fabaceae, Genus – Cassia, Species – fistula³**

CLASSICAL REFERENCES

In *Charaka Samhita*, *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) is included in *Kushtaghna Dasaimani*, *Kandughna Dasaimani*⁴ and *Tikta Skandha*⁵. *Susruta* mentioned it under *Aragwadhadhi Gana*⁶ and *Sleshma Samsamana Varga*⁷. In *Ashtanga Hridaya*, the drug included in *Nikumbhadhi Gana*, *Aragwadhadhi Gana*, and *Syamadi Gana*⁸. In *Dhanwanthari Nighantu*⁹ and *Sodhala Nighantu*¹⁰, the drug comes under *Guduchyadi Varga*. In *Madanapala Nighantu*, the drug included in *Abhayadi Prathama Varga*¹¹. In *Raja Nighantu* and *Kaiyadeva Nighantu*,

the drug is included in *Prabhadradi Varga*¹² and *Oshadhi Varga*¹³ respectively. In *Bhavaprakasa Nighantu*, it is mentioned under *Haritakyadi Varga*¹⁴. In *Saligrama Nighantu* it is included under *Ashtavarga*¹⁵.

SYNONYMS: *Aragwadha*, *Aarevata*, *Karnikara*, *Kritamala*, *Chaturangula*, *Mukuta*, *Rajavriksha*, *Syamaka*, *Samaaka*, *Suvarnaka*¹⁶

VERNACULAR NAMES

In English the drug *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) called as Indian laburnum, purging fistula, purging cassia. In Hindi it is called as Amaltas, Bandarlauri, sonhali, Girimala. Its Kannada name is Kakke, Kakke-Mara and in Malayalam called as Konna, Kanikkonna. Its Tamil Name is Konnai, Arakuvadam, Sarakkonnai, Konrath kay, Sharak-Konraik. In Telugu it is called as Rela, Kondrakaya, Aragvadamu. In Urdu called as Amaltas¹⁷.

BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

Habit—Moderate to medium-sized deciduous tree. 6 to 9 meter tall with a straight trunk and spreading branches. **Leaves**—alternate, 20-40 cm. long, paripinnate, long-stalked, stipulate, petioles 6 to 9 mm. long, vernicular. **Leaflets**—Large 5 to 12 by 3.5 to 9 cm. the lower broadly ovate, oblong, and the upper oblong or oblong-lanceolate, coriaceous, acute, acuminate, obtuse or emarginated, cuneate at base, the midrib densely pubescent beneath with numerous close slender, main nerve that is prominent beneath. The leaves generally drop off during the cold season. **Flowers**—Pedicelled, bracteates, showy, brightly yellow, bisexual, fragrant, borne in diverging axillary long simple pendulous racemes 30-50 cms. Long. Pedicel slender, bracts minute caducous. calyx 9mm. long, greenish, pubescent, five partite divided to near the base. Sepals 5, shorter than the petals, ovate or oblong, obtuse imbricate. Corolla 3.8cm

across, yellow, fivefree subequal shortly clawed, obovate, veined ascendingly, imbricate petals. Stamens 10, filaments free, yellowish. Pistil monocarpellary, ovary stalked, free at the base of the short hypanthium, ovules many. **Fruit**- Pendulous, cylindrical, nearly straight, dark brown or brownish black, smooth,

shining, hard, indehiscent, seeds many, broadly ovate, smooth, light to dark or reddish brown. The tree flowers once a year when the whole tree is covered with drooping bunches of golden yellow flowers¹⁸.



Figure No: 1.1
Cassia fistula Linn. Tree



Figure No: 1.2
Bark of *Cassia fistula* Linn.



Figure No: 1.3
Leaves of *Cassia fistula* Linn.



Figure No: 1.4
Flower of *Cassia fistula* Linn.



Figure No: 1.5
Pods of *Cassia fistula* Linn.



Figure No: 1.6
Seeds of *Cassia fistula* Linn.

HABITAT

Throughout the greater part of India, ascending up to an altitude of 1220 m in the Sub Himalayan tract and outer Himalaya, in Kumaon, abundant in forest tracts throughout upper Gangetic plain of Bengal, Central India, and deciduous forests of South India¹⁹.

PARTS USED

Root Bark, Leaf, Flower, Fruit Pulp²⁰

Bhavaprakasa Nighantu- Twak, Patra, Moola²¹.
Raja Nighantu- Moola Twak, Beeja, Majja²².
Dhanwanthari Nighantu- Phalamajja, Patra, Pushpa, Moola Twak²³.
Kaiyadeva Nighantu- Patra, Pushpa, Phala, Phala Majja²⁴.
Madhava Dravyaguna- Phala²⁵.
Madanapala Nighantu- Pushpa, Phalamajja²⁶.
Saligrama Nighantu - Patra²⁷. So-

dhala Nighantu-Phala, Phala majja²⁸**FLOWERING&FRUITINGSEASON**

The trees shed its leaves during early summer (March-May) and is in full bloom during this period.

Flowering & Fruiting - April to December^{29,30}.

PROPAGATION AND CULTIVATION

The plant is often cultivated as an ornamental plant in gardens and on roadsides. It is cultivated through direct sowing or transplanting the nursery-raised seedlings or stump-planting. The seeds should be sown in March or April, and regularly watered. The seeds take 6-52 days to germinate, and a few germinate only in the second year. Micropropagation of *Cassia fistula* Linn. has been reported³¹.

COLLECTION

The fruits are collected when ripe and then they are kept under the soil for seven days and dried in the sun. The pulp is to be separated after this and stored in air-tight containers³².

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS

Bark & Heart wood -Fistucacidine, Barbaloin, Rhein, Fistucacidin, 3,4,7,8,4'-pentahydroxy flavan.

Sap wood - Leucoanthocyanidin-4'-dihydroxy flavan-3,4-diol, Dimeric proanthocyanidin along with (-) epiafzelechin, +catechin, Kaempferol, Dihydrokaempferol, 1,8-dihydroxy-3 methyl anthraquinone. **Stem bark** - Lupeol, Beta-sitosterol, Hexacosanol tannin. **Pod** - Rhein glycoside &Fistulic acid.

Flowers -Ceryl alcohol, Fistulin, Rhein dianthraquinone glucoside, Kaempferol, Leucopelargonidin tetramer having free glycol unit, Kaempferol-3-Beta-glucoside, Kaempferol-3- neohesperidoside, Clitorin. **Fruit pulp** - Proteins, Carbohydrates, Arginine, Leucine, Methionine, Phenylalanine, Tryptophan, Aspartic acid, Glutamic acid, Glucose, Sucrose, Fructose. **Seeds** - Galactomannan. **Plant** - 7 biflavonoids, 2 triflavonoids, Clitorin, Chrysophanic acid, Emodin, Epicatechin, (-)-epiafzelechin, Kaempferol-3-Beta-glucoside, Kaempferol-3- neohesperidoside, Phlobaphene, Procyanidin.

Leaves - Rhein and its Glucoside Sennosides A & B³³.

COMMON ADULTERANTS AND SUBSTITUTES

Other species of *Cassia* are sometimes used as the substitute for the drug. Pods of *Cassia grandis* Linn. are sometimes used as a substitute. The pods are longer, thicker, and heavier than those of *Cassia fistula* Linn. They are laterally compressed, surface rough, with one prominent ridge on the dorsal and two on the ventral suture. The odour of pulp is disagreeable, tastes bitter, and is astringent³⁴.

VARIETIES

In *Raja Nighantu*³⁵, *Dhanwanthari Nighantu*³⁶, *Saligraman Nighantu Bhushana*³⁷, two varieties of *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) are mentioned - *Aragwadha* and *Karnikara*.

DOSE

According to the API, the doses mentioned are **Phala Majja**:5-10gms, **Mula Twak Kwath**:50-100 ml, **Churna**:5-10 gms, **Pushpa Kalka**:5-10gms³⁸

FORMULATIONS

Parpatamritadi Kashayam, *Trivritadi Kashayam*, *Maharasnadi Kashayam*, *Rasnasaptakam*, *Manjishtadi Kashayam*, *Triphaladi Kashayam*, *Hareetakyadi Kashayam*, *Katukamaladi Kashayam*, *Aavilt-holaadi Kashayam*, *Aragwadhamritadi Kashayam*, *Tamizhamadi Kashayam*, *Manasamitra Vatakam*, *Brihadagnimukha Choornam*, *Kachoradi Tailam*, *Swasari Tailam*, *Amrithadyam Ghritam*, *Ardrakadi Ghritam*, *Brahmi Ghritam*, *Mahat Panchagavya Ghritam*, *Sarvaamaya antaka Ghritam*, *Mahamarichyaditaila*, *Mahamanjishtadyarishta*, *Rasnadikwathayoga*, *Aragwadhadikwatha*, *Aragwadhadi Taila*, *Aragwadhadi Leha*, *Aragwadharishta* are some formulations that contains *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) as one ingredient^{39,40}.

THERAPEUTIC USES

In *Kushta*, the leaves of *Aragwadha* are pounded with sour gruel and applied in the part in case of ringworm, *Kitibha*, and *Sidhma*. And also leaves of *Aragwadha*, *Kakamachi* and *Karanja* are pounded with buttermilk and applied as an ointment after smearing with oil in leprosy or skin diseases. In *Amavata*, the leaves of *Aragwadha* are fried in mus-

tardoilandtakeninthe evening followed by a meal. ItalleviatesAma. In *Urustambha*

the tender leaves of *Sunishannaka*, *Nimba*, *Arka*, *Vetasa*, and *Aragwadha* should be used as a vegetable cooked with water and oil and without salt. In *Upadamsa* the decoction of leaves of *Karaveera*, *Jati*, *Aragwadha*, *Tarkari*, and *Arka* should be used for washing venereal wounds⁴¹.

RASAPANCHAKA OF ARAGWADHA (CASSIA FISTULA LINN.)

According to *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*, *Aragwadha* has *madhura-Tikta rasa*, *Guru guna*, *SeetaVirya*, and *Mridurechana karma*⁴². In *Kaiyadeva Nighantu*, it is mentioned that the drug possesses *Madhura-Tikta rasa*, *Guru guna*, *Tridosahara*, and *Mridurechana karma*⁴³. According to *Dhanwantari Nighantu*, the drug possesses *Tikta rasa*, *Guru guna*, *UshnaVirya*, and *Tridosahara karma*⁴⁴. According to *Raja Nighantu*, the drug possesses *Madhura rasa*, *Seeta Virya*⁴⁵.

ROGAGHNATA ACCORDING TO VARIOUS ACHARYAS

Jwara, *Hridroga*, *Vata*, *Udavarta*, *Soola*, *Gulma*, *Udara*, *Kachu*, *Raktapitta*, *Prameha*, *Krimisoola*, *Mutrakrichra*, *Kapha*, *Kandu*, *Kushta*, *Vishtambha*, *Vataraktha*, *Twakdosha*, *Dadru*, *Pama*.

PROPERTIES OF SPECIAL PARTS EXPLAINED BY VARIOUS ACHARYAS

In *Bhavaprakasa Nighantu*, *Phala* of *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) has *Sramsanam*, *Ruchyam*, *Kushtahara*, and *Pittakaphahara* properties. It is indicated in *Jwara* and *Koshtashudhi*. *Moola* is *teevravirechaka* in nature. *Beeja* (5 to 7 seeds) is *Vamaka*⁴⁶. In *Kaiyadeva Nighantu*, *Pathra* has *Kaphamedovishoshana* and *Maladoshavirechana* properties. *Pushpais* *Madhura-Kashaya-Tiktain Rasa*, *SeethaVirya* and *have Grahi Guna*⁴⁷. In *Madhava Dravyaguna*, *Phala* has *Madhura Rasa*, and it is *Sara*, *Balya* and *Vatapittahara* in nature⁴⁸. In *Madanapala Nighantu*, *Pushpais* *Tikta*, *Vatala*, *Grahi*, and *Pittakaphahara*⁴⁹. In *Saligrama Nighantu*, *Pathra* has the property of *Kaphamedovishoshana*. It is indicated in *Jwara*⁵⁰. In *Sodhala Nighantu*,

Phala is *Radhura* in *rasa*. It is *Balya*, *Amahara* and *Vatapittahara*. *Majjahave Swadu Vipaka* and *Seeta Virya*. It has properties such as *Snigdha*, *Vatahara*, *Balakara*, *Agnikara* and *Pittahara*⁵¹.

TRADITIONAL USES

The flowers of *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) are eaten as a vegetable to increase digestive fire. Its fresh stem bark is warmed on gentle fire and the juice extracted from it is given in stomach-ache due to *Krimi* (Dose 20-30ml). The burning end of the dried fruit is branded on the neck to alleviate mumps in cattle. Water extract of stem bark is given internally as a laxative (Dose 15 ml made of 5 g of bark). Pulp of ripe fruit is applied on boils for cure^{52,53,54}.

TOXICITY STUDIES

An oral acute toxicity study on Swiss Albino Mice exhibited that all the extracts were found safe up to dose 3 gm/kg body weight⁵⁵.

PHARMACOLOGICAL STUDIES

Various experimental studies proved that the drug *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) has Anti-inflammatory Activity, Antiulcer activity, Wound healing activity, Antitussive activity, Clastogenic effect, Antioxidant activity, Hepatoprotective activity, Antifungal activity, Larvicidal, and ovidal activity etc^{56,57}.

CONCLUSION

This paper is an attempt by the author to give a detailed review of this important medicinal plant used in the Indian system of medicine – *Aragwadha* (*Cassia fistula* Linn.). In this article, we discussed the classical references and pharmacognostical and pharmacological properties of *Aragwadha*. Also mentioned about the various phytochemicals present in it which act as active biological constituents and are responsible for different pharmacological actions of *Cassia fistula* Linn. The present paper also revealed that *Cassia fistula* Linn. possesses Anti-inflammatory, Antiulcer, Wound healing, Antitussive, Clastogenic effect, Antioxidant, Hepatoprotective, Antifungal, Larvicidal, and ovidal activities.

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