

A CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF ARKA KALPANA OF ARKA PRAKASHA IN STREE ROGA

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INTROODUCTION

Arka Kalpana is a specialized Ayurvedic dosage form that employs distillation to extract the active constituents of medicinal substances. The term Arka is derived from the Persian word 'Arrak,' meaning “essence”^[1] and denotes a potent liquid extract. Arka Prakasha outlines the preparation and application of Arka, emphasizing its significance in pharmacy. Due to its concentrated nature, Arka demonstrates rapid action, efficient absorption, precise dosing, and enhanced stability.

In the context of Stree Roga, which encompasses diseases characterized by complex hormonal fluctuations and imbalances of Apana Vata and Kapha-Pitta, light, fast-acting, and readily absorbable medications are advantageous. Arka preparations, administered in small doses, exhibit high efficacy and are therefore particularly suitable for these conditions.

Despite the prominence of Arka Kalpana in classical Ayurvedic literature, its application has not been extensively investigated in contemporary clinical research, particularly in gynecology.

Given the increasing prevalence of gynecological disorders, there is a need to re-examine and emphasize this valuable dosage form. This article critically examines Arka's potential for managing *Stree Roga*.

Arka Prakasha, written by Ravana, comprises 10 chapters, each containing 100 shlokas on the preparation of Arka and its therapeutic applications.^[2]

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To critically explore the principles, formulations, and therapeutic applications of Arka Kalpana as described in *Arka Prakasha*, with a specific focus on its role in the management of *Stree Roga*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The information for this review was gathered from various sources, including classical Ayurvedic texts, research articles, and current scientific literature.

Importance of Arka Kalpana

Ayurveda teaches that the efficacy of medicine depends not only on its ingredients but also on the wisdom behind its preparation, which governs its strength, depth of action, and therapeutic outcome.^[3]

According to *Charaka*, *Panchavidha Kaṣaya Kalpana* includes *Swarasa*, *Kalka*, *Sruta* (*Kwatha*), *Sheeta* (*Hima*), and *Phanta*. These are arranged in decreasing order of potency (*gurutva*) and should therefore be selected based on the patient's strength and the severity of the disease.^[4]

According to *Sushruta*, six *Kalpanas*—*Ksheera*, *Rasa*, *Kalka*, *Sruta*, *Sita*, and *Churna*—are described, with each preceding preparation being more potent than the succeeding one.^[5]

Kashyapa explains multiple *Kalpanas* such as *Churna*, *Sheeta*, *Kashaya*, *Swarasa*, *Abhishava*, *Phanta*, *Kalka*, and *Kwatha*, where the sequence does not strictly follow *guru-laghu* order, signifying a more flexible approach.^[6]

Sharngadhara describes the same five preparations—*Swarasa*, *Kalka*, *Kwatha*, *Hima*, and *Phanta*—and states that each succeeding preparation is *laghu* (more easily digestible) than the preceding one, though less potent.^[7]

Arka Prakasha features a distinctive and more advanced classification arranged in ascending order of concentration and potency.

Kalka → *Churna* → *Swarasa* → *Taila* → *Arka*.

Kalka – Ideal for Eka-doshaja (single dosha) disorders *Churna* – Beneficial in Dwandvaja (dual dosha) conditions *Swarasa* – Indicated in Sannipataja (tridoshic) imbalance. *Taila* – Useful in complex or mixed presentations

Arka – Reserved for chronic, or difficult-to-manage (Asadhya) disorders.^[8]

Among these preparations, Arka is considered the most subtle and potent. Produced by distillation, it retains the herb's volatile oils. Arka represents the most refined and powerful form, delivering the active constituents in a concentrated and readily absorbed medium. Additionally, it helps balance any residual aftertaste.^[9]

The therapeutic efficacy of a medicine is determined not only by the inherent properties of the herb but also by the quality of its preparation. **Arka Prakasha** enumerates several *Arka yogas* specifically formulated for gynecological disorders. Preparations such as *Pradarahara Arka*^[10], *Somarogaghna Arka*^[11], *Bahumutrahara Arka*^[12], *Rajoavarodhahara Arka*^[13], *Garbhakar Arka*^[14], and *Yoni Sankochakara Arka*^[15] are indicated for conditions including *Rakta Pradara* (menorrhagia), *Artavakshaya* (oligomenorrhea/amenorrhea), *Yonivyapad*, and infertility. These Arka formulations incorporate herbs with hemostatic, emmenagogue, anti-inflammatory, and uterine-tonic properties, delivered in a rapidly absorbed form. The distinctive characteristics of Arka Kalpana facilitate both symptomatic relief and deeper therapeutic outcomes, underscoring its value in gynecological care. Its application in *Stree Roga Chikitsa* exemplifies the precision of Ayurvedic pharmacy and contributes to female reproductive health through safe, effective, and targeted interventions.

Arka preparations for women should be made on certain days, such as Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday, during the day, under the *Purusha Nakshatras* (male constellations), which are considered lucky. The Purusha Nakshatras include Ashwini, Mrigashira, Punarvasu, Pushya, Chitra, Anuradha, Shravana, Dhanishta, and Shatabhisha. These constellations are believed to increase the medicine's effectiveness.^[16]

Shelf life

According to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Rules, Arka Kalpana has a shelf life of one year.

Dosage of Arka Kalpana

Arka should be given based on the person's strength (Bala), location (Desha), and season or time (Kala) to make sure the dose suits both healthy and sick people.^[17] The Ayurvedic Formulary of India (AFI) suggests 12-24 ml per day in divided doses, while the Ayurvedic Pharmacopeia of India (API) recommends 10-20 ml per day. These guidelines help tailor Arka's use to achieve the best results for each patient and setting.

S. No	Yoga Name	Reference	Ingredients	Sahapana (Vehicle)	Dosage	Timings	Indications	Pathya (Compatible foods)
1	Pradarahara Arka-1	Arka Prakasha 7/69	Masha	Ksheera, Mishri	2 pala	-	Pradara	Ghrita, Ksheera
2	Pradarahara Arka-2	Arka Prakasha 7/70	Ashoka	Ghrita, Ksheera	-	Morning	Rakta Pradara	Ghrita, Ksheera
3	Pradarahara Arka-3	Arka Prakasha 7/71	Daruharidra, Rasanjana, Vasa, Kiratikta, Arka Pushpa, Rakta Chandana, Bilva	Madhu	-	-	Rakta Pradara	-
4	Somarogaghna Arka	Arka Prakasha 7/72	Kadaliphala, Amalaki, Sharkara, Madhu	-	-	-	Somaroga	-
5	Bahumutrahara Arka	Arka Prakasha 7/73	Chakramarda Mula, Tandulambu	-	-	Morning	Bahumutra	-
6	Rajoavarodhahara Arka	Arka Prakasha 7/74	Jyothismati, Musta, Sarshapa, Vacha, Neem	Ksheera	-	-	Pushpa Karaka	-
7	Garbhakar Arka	Arka Prakasha 7/75	Ashwagandha	Ksheera, Ghrita	-	Morning	Garbhakar	-
8	Yoni Sankochakara Arka-1	Arka Prakasha 7/77	Nava Vartakini, Kustha, Saindhava, Devdaru	-	-	-	Vatala, Karkasha, Stabdha, Kumbhi Yoni (same as Pichu)	-

Probable Mode of action

Pradarahara Arka

Masha (Vigna mungo): Known for its Vata-pacifying effects, Masha strengthens tissues and supports hormonal balance, which is beneficial in disorders like *Pradara*. It additionally nourishes the reproductive system.^[18]

Ashok Twak (Saraca asoca bark)

Ashoka twak is used in treating metrorrhagia and menorrhagia. Pure phenolic glucoside (P2), isolated from stem bark, exhibited highly potent oxytocic activity on different mammals, and was similar in nature to pitocin and ergometrine.^[19]

Saraca asoca bark in India is used as a uterine sedative, and hot-water extracts administered to adult human females stimulate the uterus similarly to ergot, but without producing tonic contraction. Also employed in Menorrhagia as an emmenagogue and uterine sedative, as well as in several preparations for females. *Saraca indica*, in India, dried bark, used as an astringent in menorrhagia, to stop excessive uterine bleeding.^[20]

Daruharidra (Berberis aristata), Rasanjana

Daruharidra and its extract *Rasanjana* exhibit a wide range of pharmacological activities, including hypoglycemic, anticancer, anticoagulant, antipyretic, antibacterial, antitumor, anti-inflammatory, central nervous system depressant, antifatigue, Local anesthetic, and astringent properties. The major constituent, Berberine, has been shown to exhibit dose-dependent inhibition of 5-HT-induced uterine contractions, suggesting its potential role in affecting uterine activity.^[21] *Daruharidra* has potent anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and astringent properties. It helps reduce excessive bleeding and infections in the reproductive organs. *Daruharidra* exerted protection against free-radical-induced lipid peroxidation, thus helping prevent inflammatory diseases associated with Membrane damage & tissue injury.^[22]

Rasanjana, a concentrated extract of *Daruharidra*, has antioxidant properties and inhibits vascular permeability. It improves the formulation's astringent and hemostatic actions, making it more effective at stopping abnormal bleeding.^[23]

Vasa (Adhatoda vasica)

Vasa is considered *Agrya* in *Raktapitta*. A hemostatic herb that stops bleeding and reduces inflammation in the reproductive system. It also helps heal the uterine tissues.^[24]

Adhatoda vasica exhibits haemostatic activity, as its property “*Asranashana*” correlates with haemostasis and it is effective in controlling haemorrhagic conditions. Additionally, vasicine has been shown to control capillary haemorrhages. Vasicine possesses strong and extremely selective uterine stimulant activity in vivo and vitro. Vasicine has a likely uterotonic action.^[25]

Kiratatikta (Swertia chirata)

Bitter in taste and known for its cooling and detoxifying effects, it helps reduce inflammation, balance Pitta, and control bleeding.^[26]

Swertia chirata extract in experimental subjects suppressed Carrageenin-induced edema significantly, and reduced both 5-HT and bradykinin-induced hind paw edema significantly, and that of Prostaglandin and dextran-induced edema. It possessed marked activity in the granuloma pouch model and significant activity in the cotton Pellet granuloma model of subacute arthritis.^[27]

Arka Pushpa (Calotropis gigantea): Has astringent and anti-inflammatory properties. It tones the uterine muscles and reduces abnormal vaginal discharge and bleeding.^[28]

Rakta Chandana (Red Sandalwood): A natural coolant and astringent, it helps manage Pitta disorders, such as excessive bleeding, by stopping the flow and cooling the system.^[29]

Bilva (Aegle marmelos): An astringent herb that tones the uterine muscles, controls excessive bleeding, and balances *Vata* and *Kapha doshas*.^[30]

Somarogaghna Arka**Kadaliphala (Banana)**

A nourishing fruit with cooling properties, it helps calm Pitta and supports digestion, making it helpful in managing *Somaroga*.^[31]

Amalaki (Emblica officinalis)

Known for its high Vitamin C content, *Amalaki* is a potent antioxidant and has a cooling effect on the body.^[32] *Amalaki Choorna* contains the Shadrassa except Lavana Rasa. Amla and *Madhura Rasa* act as *VataDosha Shamaka*. *Amla Rasa* performs Vatanulomana and helps relieve *Vibhanda* and *Sarvangmarda*. *Katu Rasa* acts as *Jatharagni deepaka*, *Amapachaka*, and *Kapha Dosha Shamaka*.^[33] *Kashaya* and *Tikta Rasas* act as *Shamaka* for *Kapha Dosha*. As *Kashaya Rasa* has *Avayava Sankochana Guna*, it acts as *Srava Stambaka*. *Kashaya Rasa* also acts as *Grahi*, hence it checks the *Atipravrat* of *Shweta Srava*.^[34]

Bahumutrahara Arka Chakramarda Mula (Cassia tora)

Chakramarda is known for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Administration of *Cassia tora* prevents renal dysfunction and enhances anti-oxidative activity and nitric oxide

expression in rats subjected to renal injury.^[35]

Rajoavarodhahara Arka Jyothismati (Celastrus paniculatus)

It is *Pittakara*, a *deepaniya*, nervine tonic, and stimulant that helps regulate menstrual flow by stimulating the reproductive system and removing blockages.^[36]

The leaves contain alkaloids, saponin, a glycoside & coloring matter. The leaves are Emmenagogue.^[37]

Musta (Cyperus rotundus)

A well-known herb for balancing Pitta and Kapha doshas, *Musta* assists in managing menstrual disorders, particularly by promoting normal menstrual flow and removing obstructions.^[38]

Sarshapa (Brassica juncea)

Sarshapa acts as a stimulant, helps clear blockages in the channels, and promotes menstrual flow. Its heating properties help in reducing Kapha stagnation.^[39]

Mustard seeds contain sinigrin, a glucosinolate compound that, upon enzymatic hydrolysis by myrosinase, produces allyl isothiocyanate. This compound is responsible for mustard's pungent aroma and is believed to stimulate blood flow in the pelvic area, which may affect menstrual activity. Traditional medicinal practices have utilized mustard for its emmenagogic properties, intending to promote or regulate menstruation.^[40]

Vacha (Acorus calamus)

Vacha is known for its channel-opening and Vata-pacifying properties. *Vacha* helps clear blockages and promote menstrual flow.^[41]

Neem (*Azadirachta indica*): With its powerful detoxifying and antimicrobial properties, *Neem* purifies the blood and helps reduce inflammation in the reproductive organs, ensuring proper menstrual flow.^[42]

Garbhakara Arka

Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera)

A well-known adaptogen and uterine tonic. *Ashwagandha* enhances fertility by nourishing the reproductive system, balancing hormones, and supporting healthy conception.^[43]

It was shown that extracts of *Withania somnifera* fruits, leaves, stems, and especially roots enhance sperm quality indices, such as motility and count, in men and also reduce the effects of chemical toxins on the gonads in both men and women. *Withania somnifera* can increase gonadal weight in both sexes, enhance folliculogenesis and spermatogenesis, and improve LH, FSH, and testosterone.^[44]

Yoni Sankochakara Arka

Nava Vartakini (Chlorophytum borivilianum)

Known for its rejuvenating properties, it strengthens and tones the vaginal muscles, helping in conditions like *Vatala* and *Karkasha Yoni*.^[45]

Kushta (Saussurea lapa)

Kushta is a potent herb; as a *Vatakaphahara*, it reduces inflammation and balances *Vata and kapha dosha*. *Kushta* helps promote elasticity and the healing of vaginal tissues.^[46]

Alcoholic extract of *Saussurea lappa* possesses significant wound healing activity by increasing hydroxyproline content, consequently promoting collagen synthesis.^[47]

MSS Ganachari, S Kumar, A Patel. Wound healing activity of *Saussurea lappa* roots

Saindhava (Rock Salt): With its penetrating and softening qualities, *Saindhava* helps reduce stiffness in the vaginal area and promotes tissue flexibility.

Devdaru (Cedrus deodara)

Devadaru is *Kaphavatahara* and *dushtavrana visodhana karma*.^[48]

Chloroform extract of *Cedrus deodara* showed antioxidant properties and significant wound healing potential by increased hydroxyproline expression.^[49]

DISCUSSION

Arka exemplifies the principles of Ayurvedic pharmacy, wherein distillation transforms medicinal herbs into potent, fast-acting formulations by extracting their active constituents.

In *Stree Roga*, where pathologies arise from intricate interactions between Apana Vata and Kapha-Pitta imbalances, optimal treatment involves medications that are light, fast-acting, and systemic. Arka Kalpana aligns with these therapeutic requirements, as it is effective at low doses, easily administered, and facilitates the efficient delivery of its active constituents to the reproductive system (Mechanism of Avarana, Types, Importance of Vata, 2020).

The formulations detailed in *Arka Prakasha*, including *Pradarahara Arka*, *Rajoavarodhahara Arka*, and *Garbhakara Arka*, exemplify a targeted therapeutic approach. These preparations incorporate herbs with hemostatic, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and uterine-supportive properties, thereby addressing both the symptoms and underlying causes of conditions such as Rakta Pradara, Artavakshaya, Yonivyapad, and infertility. The distillation process enhances these therapeutic effects by optimizing the extraction and delivery of the herbs' active compounds. Arkha Kalpana represents a versatile, fast-acting, and effective therapeutic option for a range of gynecological disorders. Its rapid symptom relief and ease of administration underscore its value in both traditional and contemporary Ayurvedic practice for women's health.

Further research scope

Arka Kalpana embodies the fundamental principles of Ayurvedic pharmacy, including precision, potency, and a therapeutic focus. Current research on these formulations remains limited, suggesting substantial opportunities for further investigation. Rigorous studies on Arka preparations may yield new evidence regarding their efficacy and safety.

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