



Ancient Formula, Modern Science: Sri Lanka's Herbal Answer to Cough and Cold Relief

As respiratory illnesses surge globally—ranging from seasonal flu to chronic bronchitis and asthma—people are increasingly turning toward traditional medicine for safer, effective alternatives. In Sri Lanka, a time-honored Ayurvedic remedy made from *Justicia adhatoda* leaves, *Zingiber officinale* (ginger), *Glycyrrhiza glabra* (licorice), and natural palm sugar stands out as a powerful expectorant and antispasmodic.

This herbal blend is more than folk wisdom—modern research validates its potential to relieve congestion, ease coughing, and support long-term respiratory health.

1. *Justicia adhatoda (Adhatoda vasica)*: The Lung Protector

Known locally as Adhatoda or Vasa, this plant is a cornerstone in Ayurveda for treating respiratory issues. Its primary alkaloid, vasicine, has been scientifically shown to:

- Dilate bronchi and clear airways
- Act as a natural mucolytic (breaks down mucus)
- Exhibit anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties

A study published in *American Journal of Physiology Lung Cellular and Molecular Physiology* (2021) confirmed that vasicine not only reduces bronchospasm but also enhances oxygen uptake, making it beneficial in bronchial asthma and chronic bronchitis.

2. *Zingiber officinale* (Ginger): Nature's Anti-Inflammatory



Ginger has earned global recognition as a natural anti-inflammatory and warming herb. Its bioactive compounds, gingerols and shogaols, help:

- Suppress cough reflex
- Inhibit inflammatory cytokines
- Improve circulation to the lungs

Research published in the *Drugs in Context* (2023) demonstrated its effectiveness in easing throat irritation and dry coughs, especially during influenza outbreaks.

3. Palm Sugar: The Soothing Sweetener

Often dismissed as just a sweetener, palm sugar plays a therapeutic role in this formulation. Unlike refined sugar, it:

- Soothes throat inflammation
- Enhances the palatability of bitter herbs
- Offers trace minerals like potassium and magnesium

Its demulcent action provides symptomatic relief for dry, irritated throats—common in bronchitis and dry cough.

***Glycyrrhiza glabra* (Licorice): The Herbal Shield**

Licorice root is widely used in both Eastern and Western herbal traditions. In Ayurveda, it's known for its kasa-shwasahara action—relieving cough and breathlessness.

Key properties include:



- Glycyrrhizin, which has anti-inflammatory and antiviral action
- Supports mucosal healing and reduces bronchial irritation
- Boosts immune response to respiratory pathogens

A 2023 review in the *Drugs in Context* emphasized its efficacy in viral-induced respiratory inflammation and chronic bronchial conditions.

Synergy in Action

When used together, these ingredients form a synergistic formula targeting every stage of a respiratory condition:

- *Justicia adhatoda* breaks down and expels mucus
- Ginger reduces inflammation and eases coughing
- Licorice soothes mucosal linings and supports recovery
- Palm sugar enhances absorption and taste compliance

This combination is traditionally administered as a decoction, syrup, or herbal infusion and is commonly prescribed during influenza, chest congestion, chronic cough, and early stages of bronchial asthma.

A Case for Modern Integration

With growing interest in plant-based wellness, this Ayurvedic formulation holds great promise as an integrative therapy. While it is already in use across Sri Lanka in various over-the-counter remedies, there is ample scope for:

- Standardized formulations for international markets
- Clinical trials to confirm efficacy in larger populations



- Incorporation into respiratory care protocols as an adjunct or preventive remedy

Breathing New Life into Tradition

As the world looks for sustainable, holistic health solutions, revisiting and validating remedies like this becomes more important than ever. Combining traditional wisdom with modern science offers not just symptomatic relief, but a pathway toward natural resilience in respiratory health.