



Cassia alata and Curcuma longa: Natural Allies for Skin Health and Disease Prevention

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Skin diseases, ranging from fungal infections to inflammatory conditions, are common across populations and are often exacerbated by environmental stress, poor hygiene, or immune dysfunction. In traditional medicine systems like Ayurveda and Sri Lankan Deshiya Chikitsa, two herbs stand out for their exceptional dermatological benefits: *Cassia alata* (locally known as Eththora) and *Curcuma longa* (Kaha or turmeric). These botanicals are revered not only for their cultural importance but also for their scientifically proven antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant properties that support healthy skin and prevent various skin disorders.

Cassia alata (Eththora) – The Natural Antifungal Leaf

Cassia alata, commonly called the “ringworm bush” or Eththora in Sinhala, has been used traditionally for the treatment of fungal infections, eczema, and other skin ailments. The plant’s leaves, when crushed or prepared as a paste, are often applied directly to infected areas.

Scientific validation confirms its antifungal potency. A 2019 pharmacological review reported that leaf extracts of *Cassia alata* showed significant inhibitory effects against *Candida albicans*, *Trichophyton rubrum*, and *Microsporum gypseum*, which are major pathogens responsible for skin fungal infections. These antifungal properties are attributed to anthraquinones, chrysophanol, and flavonoids present in the leaves.

In addition, *Cassia alata* exhibits anti-inflammatory and wound-healing effects, making it beneficial for inflammatory skin conditions like dermatitis and psoriasis. A study published in *Pharmaceutical Biology* (2018) found that ethanolic extracts accelerated wound contraction and re-epithelialization in animal models, validating its traditional use in treating wounds, boils, and skin eruptions.



❖ *Curcuma longa* (Kaha) – The Golden Shield for Skin

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), known as Kaha in Sri Lanka, is perhaps one of the most scientifically studied medicinal herbs in the world. Traditionally, it is used topically and internally to treat acne, pigmentation, infections, and even leprosy.

The golden compound curcumin is the primary active phytochemical in turmeric and is responsible for its therapeutic effects. Numerous *in vitro* and clinical studies have shown that curcumin inhibits pro-inflammatory cytokines like TNF- α and IL-6, reduces oxidative stress, and modulates immune responses, which are vital in controlling chronic skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, and acne vulgaris.

One 2021 clinical trial published in the *Journal of Dermatological Treatment* demonstrated that topical turmeric cream significantly reduced acne lesions and improved skin clarity in patients within just four weeks. Moreover, turmeric's antioxidant effects help neutralize free radicals, thereby slowing premature aging and reducing UV-induced skin damage.

In addition, turmeric possesses strong antibacterial and wound-healing properties. It enhances collagen synthesis, promotes faster tissue repair, and prevents secondary bacterial infections in open wounds—making it suitable for cuts, burns, and ulcers.

❖ **Synergistic Potential in Skincare Formulations**

Both *Cassia alata* and *Curcuma longa* offer distinct yet complementary benefits for skin health. While *Cassia alata* directly targets fungal pathogens and promotes healing, *Curcuma longa* reduces inflammation, supports antioxidant defenses, and enhances the skin's overall tone and resilience.

In traditional Sri Lankan remedies, these herbs are often combined with coconut oil, beeswax, or plant-based ghee to enhance penetration and bioavailability when applied externally. Such combinations can serve as the basis for modern herbal ointments, creams, and cleansers for managing infections, pigmentation, and inflammatory skin conditions.



✓ Conclusion

Nature offers powerful tools for managing and preventing skin disorders. Cassia alata and Curcuma longa stand out for their time-tested and research-supported roles in skincare. With antifungal, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing properties, these herbs represent a safe, effective, and affordable approach to both everyday skincare and the treatment of persistent skin conditions. Continued research and integration into modern cosmetic and pharmaceutical products can enhance their availability and clinical relevance—making traditional wisdom a valuable part of future dermatology.