Combating Chikungunya and Respiratory Infections in Sri Lanka

🌿 Combating Chikungunya and Respiratory Infections in Sri Lanka: A Traditional Herbal Approach with Scientific Insight

As Sri Lanka faces a sharp rise in Chikungunya and respiratory viral infections including new COVID-19 variants, the nation once again turns to its rich herbal heritage for immune support and symptomatic relief. A traditional decoction made from well-known medicinal plants—ginger, coriander seeds, Fumaria parviflora (Parpataka), Coscinium fenestratum (Venivel), Piper longum (Thippili), and Alpinia calcarata (Heen Araththa)—is gaining renewed attention for its ability to support recovery during viral outbreaks.

With a blend of scientific validation and ethnomedical knowledge, this article explores how these plants may help alleviate symptoms and strengthen the body's natural defenses against Chikungunya, COVID-19, and similar infections.

🦟 Sri Lanka’s Dual Epidemic Challenge
🦟 Chikungunya Outbreak
Recent weeks have seen a worrying increase in Chikungunya cases in the Western Province, driven by post-monsoon mosquito breeding. Patients present with fever, rash, joint pain, and prolonged fatigue, with some suffering from post-viral arthritis for months.

🫁 Respiratory Infections on the Rise
Simultaneously, Sri Lanka is witnessing a spike in respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19 subvariants, influenza, and RSV. While generally mild, these illnesses still place pressure on healthcare systems due to shared symptoms like fever, cough, and body pain.

🌿 Traditional Decoction: A Time-Tested Herbal Strategy
In traditional Sri Lankan medicine, a polyherbal decoction has been widely used to treat febrile and respiratory illnesses. The following ingredients are key components of this traditional blend:

🫚 1. *Zingiber officinale* (Ginger)

Well-studied for its antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and bronchodilatory effects.

Supports immune modulation and eases respiratory congestion.

🌿 2. *Coriandrum sativum* (Coriander Seeds)
Contains linalool and other terpenes that help reduce fever and inflammation.

Acts as a mild diuretic and supports detoxification.

🍃 3. *Fumaria parviflora* (Parpataka)
Known for its detoxifying, liver-supporting, and cooling properties.

Isoquinoline alkaloids contribute to its anti-inflammatory effects, especially helpful in post-viral recovery.

🌱 4. *Coscinium fenestratum* (Venivel)
Rich in berberine, an alkaloid with broad-spectrum antiviral and antibacterial activity.

Traditionally used for fever, diarrhea, and skin infections.

Supports liver function and reduces inflammation.

🌶️ 5. *Piper longum* (Thippili)
A potent bioavailability enhancer due to its active compound piperine.

Demonstrates antipyretic, immunomodulatory, and bronchoprotective effects.

🌺 6. *Alpinia calcarata* (Heen Araththa)
Used in respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, and cough.

Exhibits antimicrobial, analgesic, and bronchodilatory properties.

□ Scientific Support for Herbal Integration

Emerging studies support the pharmacological roles of these herbs:

Berberine from Venivel has shown inhibition of SARS-CoV-2, dengue, and influenza viruses in lab settings.

Ginger extract demonstrated activity against RSV and parainfluenza viruses, and reduces airway inflammation.

Piperine enhances absorption of co-administered herbs and modulates the immune response.

Heen Araththa extracts have demonstrated bronchodilation and antioxidant activity in preclinical models.

Together, this formulation may reduce fever, joint inflammation, cough, and fatigue, offering a multi-targeted approach to viral infection management.

🛡 **Public Health Strategy: Complementary, Not Alternative**
A two-pronged approach is vital:

✔ **Modern Medicine:**
Vector control, supportive care, and vaccination for COVID-19 and flu

Symptom-based diagnosis and clinical monitoring

🌿 **Traditional Complement:**
Use of evidence-supported herbal decoctions at community level

Focus on immune strengthening, symptom relief, and post-viral recovery

Such herbal remedies can serve as adjuncts, particularly in rural or under-resourced areas where access to pharmaceuticals may be limited.

☯ Conclusion

In the face of Sri Lanka’s growing Chikungunya and respiratory infection burden, traditional herbal medicine offers a promising, locally accessible, and cost-effective solution. The decoction containing Parpataka, Venivel, Thippili, Heen Araththa, ginger, and coriander seeds brings together centuries of traditional wisdom and modern pharmacological evidence.

By integrating this herbal strategy into community health initiatives—alongside allopathic medicine—we can promote faster recovery, stronger immunity, and lower symptom burden during viral outbreaks.

🖊 Join the Conversation

Are you seeing a revival of traditional medicine in your region too? How are communities coping with dual disease burdens? Share your thoughts and let’s explore a future where ethnobotany meets evidence-based healthcare.