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Cover story

Heen Binkohomba

Andrographis paniculata (Burm.f.) Nees.

Family: ACANTHACEAE

Vernacular names: Sinhala: *Heen binkohomba*; Sanskrit: *Kalmegh*;

English: *King of bitters*; Tamil: *Nilavembu*

The plant, *Andrographis paniculata* (Burm.f.) Nees, grows as an erect herb to a height of 30–110 cm (12–43 in) in moist, shaded places. The slender stem is dark green and lance-shaped leaves have hairless blades. The small flowers are whitish, arranged in lax spreading racemes or panicles. The fruit is a capsule around 2 cm long and it contains many yellow-brown seeds¹.

The leaves and roots of plant have been used since centuries to cure the wide spectrum of health ailments. The plants are also recommended for the use in cases of chronic and seasonal fever and common cold. *A. paniculata* has been reported broad range of biological activities, such as, anti-pyretic, antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, choleric, hypoglycaemic, hypocholesterolaemic, and adaptogenic effects.

Whole aerial part of the plant, used medicinally, contains a large number of chemical constituents, mainly lactones, diterpenoids, diterpene glycosides, flavonoids, and flavonoid glycosides.

The overall, it is also widely used for medicinal purposes by the traditional practitioners, tribes, or community as a folklore remedies in different countries. *A. Paniculata* appears to be beneficial and safe for relieving acute respiratory tract infections symptoms and reducing time to symptom resolution. *A. Paniculata* as a monotherapy, or as an herbal mixture, as well as exploring its potential to reduce antibiotic prescribing in primary care, is warranted².

A. paniculata, is used as a bitter ingredient in 26 Ayurvedic formulations. In, Sri Lanka, it is use in *Sudarshana* powder as a main key ingredient (50%)³. It also has proven its *in-vivo* and *in-vitro* antipyretic, anti-inflammatory, anti-nociceptive, PGE modulating effect and antioxidant properties.

References

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Photograph by Dr. W.A.S. Saroja Weerakoon and Ms. A.D.S.

Tharanga