Kandha: A brew thick with green goodness and nourishment

Posted on



Most Sri Lankans gulp down a morning mug of Kandha, a veritable magic potion that gives the drinker strength to face the day.

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A dose of wal Kottamalli (licorice weed) will reduce blood glucose

Kola kandha, as it is popularly known throughout the countryside, can be made from a variety of green leaves, each famed for its own intrinsic nutritional values, but the process is same to all.

While kandha may not have the power to actually cure you of any illness, it is wholesome enough to prevent a lot of them, which is always better.

A mug of *kola kandha* every morning will help you keep the body beautiful, will detoxify physical impurities and create the necessary equilibrium. This is done by maintaining, according to the humoralist and ayurvedic system, the four humors or elements at work, namely, earth, wind, water and fire, functioning at its optimum best.

Brewing a mug for yourself

First take a bundle of the recommended leaves of your choice. Wash it, chop it, blend it and extract the juice. Then strain it. Put a cup of rice into a pan and boil it with a larger amount of water than you would use if you were making only rice. Boil the rice until it is cooked. Add the blended juice. Add a cup of coconut milk and salt. You can also add a clove or two of garlic and a tablespoon of pepper corn. When serving, to make it more palatable, a piece of jaggery will come in handy.

Sri Lanka’s herbal soups are consumed mainly in the morning during breakfast. Unless one has acquired a cultivated taste for it, this is usually gulped down, followed by a bite of jaggery to reduce its bitterness. Depending on one’s taste, it can be made thick or watery thin.

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But whatever the leaves used for the kandha, they share two common traits: They are deep green in colour and come crammed with nutrients that promise wonders for overall health.

Gotu Kola

The most popular herbal soup and the most hailed for its nutritional value, is *Gotu Kola*, *Centella asiatica*. Called the herb of enlightenment in Chinese medicine, it is commonly found in Sri Lanka. *Gotu Kola* is known for its anti inflammatory and rejuvenating properties. It improves memory, aids concentration, promotes healthy skin, nails and hair and increases efficient blood circulation. It keeps the nervous system in balance and helps meditation.



Gotu kola, mukunuwenna and hathawariya kandha

Wel-penela and Hathawariya

Wel-penela is a leaf found mainly in the wetlands and one that boasts properties to beat rheumatism and provides relief to those suffering from haemorrhoids. It is also used to allay nervous disorders and fight chronic bronchitis. While the *Wel-penela* is a climber, the wild asparagus or the *Hathawariya* is a shrub and its properties are known to promote healthy energy levels and boost the immunity system. It also promotes digestion and bowel movement, beats sleep disorders and enhances kidney function. Both *Hathawariya* and *Wel-penela* are also known to increase sexual libido.

The "joyweed" and the Curry Leaf

The energy drink in the leafy world is *Mukunuwenna*, which comes power packed with a mocktail of vitamins, proteins, iron and fibre. Known as sessile joyweed, it is probably the most consumed leafy veg in Sri Lanka and helps in restoring digestive disorders whilst promoting stamina and strength.

The curry leaf, *Karapincha* is both a stimulant as well as a relaxant and works as a mild laxative too. It promotes clearer vision and reduces blood sugar and cholesterol levels. It also helps to purify the blood and is a good source of vitamins A, C and K, calcium, and iron.

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Apart from these, *Kola kandha* can be made from a host of other leaves too, including *Erabadu* for dysentery, *Polpala* for kidneys and the urinal tract, *Neeramuliya* for blood circulation, *Kohila* for piles, *Eramusu* for skin and *Olinda* for the heart. Rarer herbal soups are made of Wild *Kottamalli* to reduce blood sugar, *Kohomba* (neem) to purify the blood and *Yati Narang* to cure the cough and phlegm. Although not a green herb, a special mention must be made for *Kurakkan* (finger millet) *kandha*, popular and sought after for its fat burning properties.

Kola kandha not only nourishes and rejuvenates the entire system but also fortifies the body’s immunity to defy the onslaught of infection. At a cosmetic level, a regular cuppa also produces smoother skin, clearer complexion and boosts hair growth. It is an ideal morning mocktail, an energy drink that helps you work, rest and play better.

