

Monograph – Zingiber officinale

Botanical Name

Zingiber officinale

Family

Zingiberaceae

Synonyms

Zanjabīl, Adrak (fresh), Sūnth (dried),
English – ginger, China – Jiang,
Sanskrit – Gringa Vere.



Taste

Pungent.

Odour

Aromatic.

Mizāj

- Fresh ginger – hot and moist. ^[9]
- Dry ginger – hot and dry. ^[9]

Actions

Carminative, expectorant, stimulant.

Uses

The spectrum of use for ginger is very wide, some uses are for; poor digestion, lack of digestive heat, poor appetite, poor memory, lack of circulation and energy, nausea, vomiting and joint pains.

Parts Used

Rhizome.

Dose

1 gram at night or when necessary.

Origins of Ginger

Zanjabīl, whose common name is ginger, is a very old plant. Botanically, it is known as *Zingiber officinale*. The Arabic word Zanjabīl is said to have been derived from the Sanskrit word of Sringeber. Maulana Sayyid Sulayman Nadwi mentions in his classic *Ardhul Qur'ān* that, for us (Indians) it is a matter of great pride that there are some fortunate words of our country which have found place in the holy Qur'an. ^[10] He mentions Misk, Kāfur and Zanjabīl, being the three medicines. The common name, ginger is also derived from Sanskrit 'Gringa' meaning horn, and 'Vere' meaning body, in reference to the shape of the root.

Historical Background

Ginger is a very old plant known to many societies. It was first mentioned in China around 400 BC. In China, ginger – Jiang has been cultivated since before written history began. Marco Polo also reported seeing it in China between 1280 and 1290 CE. In Chinese traditional medicine, ginger has long and reputable uses. Ginger ranks as the fifth most important plant in traditional Chinese medicine. The ancient Greeks and Romans were familiar with ginger as a spice and medicine.

During the time of the Prophet Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم ^[11] the Byzantine Emperor once sent a jar of pickled ginger to him as a gift and he ate from it and gave a piece to each of his companions. It is stated in *Tafsīr*

Mazhari that the Arabs had a great liking for ginger and they used it as a medicine and as a drink. Ginger has been grown since ancient times in India too. The Indian physicians considered ginger to be an important medicine and gave it names such as 'Great Remedy' and 'Panacea'.

Different Types of Ginger

Ginger is cultivated in many different parts of the world including Australia, China, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Japan and Jamaica. Botanically speaking, ginger is an underground stem, known as rhizome, which bears buds on the top of each of its stubby fingers and grows a mass of thin tangled root below. Fresh ginger is called Adrak. It is fleshy and bulbous and looks rather like several small potatoes clumped together and flattened. The main segments are about 80 cm long, 40cm wide and 20cm thick. Ginger grows well in conditions which are hot and damp.

Ginger is propagated by dividing the rhizome into fingers, each of which contains a bud, and planting these about a foot apart. They grow rapidly and flower in the autumn. When the aerial stems wither, the rhizomes are dug up, fresh from roots and washed. They are then peeled with a narrow blade knife by which the layer of cork and part of the parenchyma of the cortex are removed, at which they are again washed and dried in the sun for up to seven days. This processed dry ginger is called Yābis Zanjabīl in Arabic or Sūnth in Urdu.

Therapeutic Uses

The use of ginger as a safe and effective medicine is so well established that no home or pharmacy should be without ginger. Thousands of years of use in Arabia, China, India, Pakistan and Europe

testifies to its benefits. Modern research continues to validate the uses of ginger and have confirmed much of the classical uses suggested by physicians such as Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushud of Muslim Spain and modern Hakeem's such as Sabir Multani and Dr Khalid Ghaznavi of Lahore, Pakistan. Due to the Mizāj of ginger being hot and moist, it is an excellent medicine to use in any cold or phlegmatic condition, such as cold or flu. For colds and flu, bacterial or viral, ginger will be found most helpful, as it promotes heat, induces sweating and destroys germs and poisons.

The Circulatory System

Ginger, as we mentioned earlier, is warm and stimulating, therefore it is no surprise that ginger is an excellent medicine for circulation and heart conditions. Heart disease is the main cause of death and disability in the so-called "modern world". About two thirds of "modern human beings" have high blood cholesterol, half of which will have heart attacks, strokes or other circulatory diseases. The sources of all these circulatory diseases are not simple to identify, except that lifestyle contributes significantly. These modern conditions like the furring of arteries (atherosclerosis) or hardening of arteries is a major factor. This degeneration is a result of reduced circulation. Ginger helps to improve the quality of the contraction by preventing blood-clots. Ginger can act as a natural aspirin without the side effects of the tablet.

Memory and Ginger

Dried ginger improves poor memory. For this purpose, 1g of powder in warm milk is an excellent way of using ginger.

Stomach and Digestion

One of the most important and best known uses of ginger is for the digestive system. It is the classic medicine for dealing with many digestive disorders. Ginger promotes Harārat-e-Gharāzi (digestive and metabolic fire), thus promoting digestive heat burning toxins and removing and lowering cholesterol deposits. Ginger is a pungent herb par excellence; we may call ginger the stimulating carminative for digestion.

Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea and vomiting can be a problem when travelling. Dried ginger is found to be effective for nausea and vomiting caused by travelling. ^[12]

For this purpose, 1g of dried ginger may be used 30 minutes before starting the journey and then one dose every four hours. Many women experience nausea and vomiting due to pregnancy. Dried ginger helps in these conditions too. The only condition in which ginger should not be used is when there are ulcers in the digestive system.