



Tulsi

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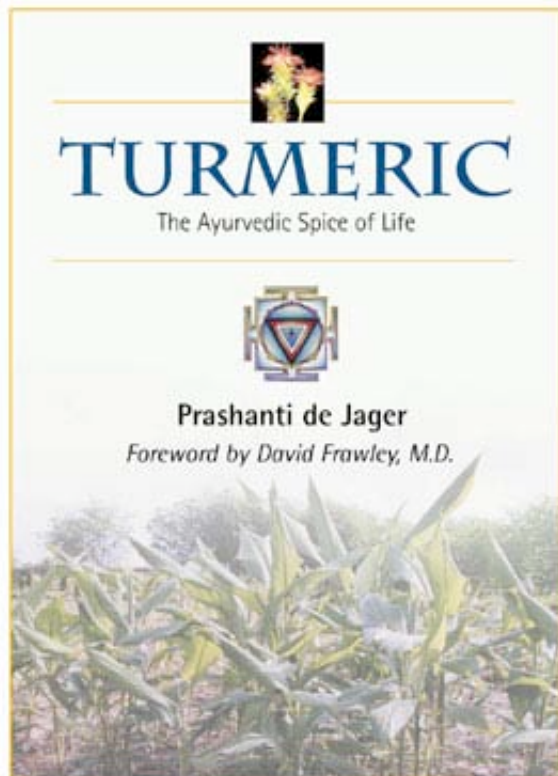
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Turmeric: The Ayurvedic Spice of Life

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Great Healers, in one form or another they are sought out by all of us. Somewhere inside we all seek balanced happy lives and so we seek that which will grant us health and joy. This article is about Turmeric, one of the planet's great healers. This healer is not obscured in some esoterica and not distanced by a cosmic price tag. As usual with great healers, it is very close to you and readily accessible, in fact, it is probably in your house right now, though it may be hard to believe that such a common item is one of the world's best all around herbs.

The core of its worldwide ubiquity is found while walking through the bazaars of India where you are bound to find a masala wallah, a spice seller, with mounds of Turmeric that he is selling by the kilo. It is a great sight in the midst of mountains of clove buds, black pepper fruits, coriander seeds, cinnamon bark, cardamom pods and all these marvelous colorful spices that the world has loved since Silk Road days. Ayurveda is as full of commonsense as it is humming of the mystical and so, especially since it is an oral tradition, it is with the common people of India, like the spice sellers and the village mothers, that many traditions of herbal knowledge are learned and passed from elder to child for countless generations. In this way the ability of Turmeric is proven and its legacy grows. I have learned so much about 'common' herbs from 'common' people that I could never have learned elsewhere, a fact predicted by Paracelsus who in 1493 wrote:

"The physician does not learn everything he must know and master from a high college alone. From time to time he must consult old women, gypsies, magicians, wayfarers and all manner of peasant folk and random people and learn from them, for these people have more knowledge about such things than all the high colleges."

Though Turmeric is common it is an uncommonly beautiful plant with orange red lily-like flowers and deep green long slender leaves that smell like mangos. Most of the Ayurvedic doctors that I meet in India consider Turmeric, to be one of the best herbs of India, and many go as far as saying that it is the best. What Ayurveda has known for millennium modern science is now starting to prove for itself in laboratories and clinics around the world.

Energetics Summary

- Gana: Kusthaghna, Haridradi, Shirovirechana
- Guna: Laghu (light) & Ruksha (rough)
- Rasa: Katu (pungent) & Tikta (bitter)
- Virya: Ushna
- Vipaka: Katu (pungent)
- Dosha: Tridoshic at normal dosages
- Prabhava: Purifies the skin and complexion
- Manas Tri Guna: Sattva

Because it is pungent and warming it pacifies Kapha and Vata. It is also bitter and astringent and so it pacifies the Pitta dosha. Being 70% carbohydrates lends a



sweetness that can balance Vata and Pitta. In my experience Turmeric is predominantly Sattvic but leans toward being Rajas, sort of like a combination of a playful monk with a job to do and a calm noble warrior.

Healing Properties Overview

Besides flavoring food, to purify the blood and remedy skin conditions is probably the most common use of Turmeric in Ayurveda. The principle organs that it treats are the skin, heart, liver and lungs. Sushruta recommended it for epilepsy and bleeding disorders. Charaka recommends it for skin diseases, to purify the bodymind, and to help the lungs expel Kapha. Activities of Turmeric include: alterative, analgesic, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, anti-tumor, anti-allergic, antioxidant, antiseptic, antispasmodic, appetizer, astringent, cardiovascular, carminative, cholagogue, digestive, diuretic, stimulant, and vulnerary. Therapeutic uses include: AIDS/HIV, anemia, cancer, diabetes, digestion, food poisoning, gallstones, indigestion, IBS, parasites, poor circulation, staph infections, and wounds. Turmeric helps regulate the female reproductive system and purifies the uterus and breastmilk, and in men it purifies and builds semen, which is counterintuitive for a pungent bitter. It reduces fevers, diarrhea, urinary disorders, insanity, poisoning, cough, and lactation problems in general. It is used to treat external ulcers that respond to nothing else. Turmeric decreases Kapha and so is used to remove mucus in the throat, watery discharges like leucorrhea, and any pus in the eyes, ears, or in wounds, etc.

Names of Turmeric

Every Ayurvedic herb typically has dozens of names that point to different aspects of the herb including its appearance, its mythology, and its healing ability. I feel that learning an herb's names is an essential way to study the herbs. The most common of the dozens of Sanskrit names for Turmeric is Haridra, which can be translated to mean 'the yellow one.' Other Sanskrit names are Aushadhi, Gauri, and Kanchani. Gauri means 'the one whose face is light and shining,' and Kanchani means the 'Golden Goddess.' To me the most interesting name is Aushadhi, which usually simply means 'herb.' However, it is used in the Vedas as a name of Turmeric. This makes me think they considered Turmeric to be the herb, the most outstanding herb, the one herb above all others. The Hindi name is Haldi, which means 'yellow,' and the Latin binomial is *Curcuma longa*, a member of the Ginger family, Zingiberaceae.

A World of Turmeric

"I have found a plant that has all the qualities of Saffron, but it is a root."
(Marco Polo on Turmeric, 1280 AD)

As far as documented evidence, it is used daily in India for at least 6000 years as a medicine, beauty aid, cooking spice, and a dye, though I am sure its use goes back at least 30,000 years. Ostensibly it was used to worship the Sun during the Solar period of India, a time when Lord RamaChandra walked the Earth. Especially in South India, you can see people wearing a dried Turmeric rhizome bead the size of a large grape around their neck or arm. This is an ancient talisman tradition used to ward off evil and grant to the wearer healing and protection. Buddhist monks have used Turmeric as a dye for their robes for at least 2000 years. It was listed in an Assyrian herbal circa 600 BC and was mentioned by Dioscorides in the herbal that was the Western herbal from the 1st to the 17th century. As mentioned above, Europe rediscovered it 700 years ago via Marco Polo and it is used in traditional Brazilian medicine as a potent anti-venom to neutralize the bleeding and lethal poison of Pit Vipers.

For at least 1000 years Chinese Medicine has used Turmeric especially for the Spleen, Stomach, and Liver Meridians. They use it to stimulate and purify, and as an anti-biotic, anti-viral, and an analgesic. As such it is used to stimulate and strengthen the blood and decrease blood pressure, to clear abdominal pain and stagnation in men, women and children, and to remove stagnant Chi, the pain due to stagnant Chi, and excessive wind element. They consider it one of the better herbs for women because it stimulates the uterus and clears menstrual stagnation, dysmenorrhea and amenorrhea due to congested blood arising from a lack of heat or simply a deficiency. Personally, with the way that Turmeric can move the Chi, I use large therapeutic doses of Turmeric with Yin asanas as an herbal equivalent of an acupuncture session.

Unani is the name of the ancient Persian system of medicine that has connected Ayurveda with the Greek Medicine for thousands of years. In visiting Unani Hakims from the Nile to the Narmada I have appreciated the way they keep their herbs cleaner than other herbalists. In Unani Turmeric is considered to be the safest herb of choice for all blood disorders since it purifies, stimulates, and builds blood. You have heard of the phrase "Hot to the 3rd degree." I expect that the etymology of this phrase is with the Unani Hakims. "To the nth degree" is how they describe the potency of an herb, which can have any given quality to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th degree. For instance, Turmeric is considered both dry and hot to the 3rd degree.

When the ancient Polynesians made their fantastic voyages in canoes across the Pacific Ocean to Hawaii they took with them the roots, cuttings, and seeds of about 25 of their most valuable plants. Known as Olena, meaning yellow, Turmeric was one of these plants. Their tradition is carried on today by the Kahuna of Hawaii, the 'Knowers of the Leaf' or rhizomes as the case may be. As in other cultures, they use Olena as food, medicine, dye, and for ceremonial purification. The juice is used in earaches or to purify the sinuses via the nose. The root is also eaten to treat most pulmonary problems such as bronchitis or asthma. The Indian practice of applying the root paste to the

face to cure any blemishes is popular in this tradition as well. For ceremonial purification prayers are chanted as the mixture of fresh Olena juice and sea water is sprinkled on people, places and objects to remove negativity and restore harmony.

Turmeric's Molecular Constituents

Turmeric has hundreds of molecular constituents, each with a variety of biological activities. For instance, there are at least 20 molecules that are anti-biotic, 14 that are known cancer preventatives, 12 that are anti-tumor, 12 are anti-inflammatory and there are at least 10 different anti-oxidants. The list goes on and on, in fact I counted 326 known biological activities of Turmeric in one particular database. Like Rose, Turmeric is a veritable pharmacy in its own right, with literally hundreds of molecules and activities on its 'shelves.' This is also testimony to the use of whole herbs and not just isolated molecules. And speaking of molecules, by far the most researched in Turmeric are the three gold-colored alkaloidal Curcuminoids: Curcumin, Demethoxy-curcumin, and Bisdemethoxy-curcumin. Most of the research done is with a 95% Curcuminoid extract of Turmeric, though in its raw state Turmeric is only 3-5% Curcuminoids. The rhizome is 70% carbohydrates, 7% protein, 4% minerals, and at least 4% essential oils. It also has vitamins, other alkaloids, and is about 1% resin.

Turmeric in Aromatherapy

The essential oil contains hundreds of different medicines but the main ones are Sesquiterpene alcohols and hydrocarbons. The essential oil taken internally or used externally it is anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-parasitic, and anthelmintic. As with all essential oils care must be taken when using it internally. Internal dose of the oil is 5 drops in a glass of water or tea with a teaspoon of honey stirred in.

The Skin's Beautician

Internally or externally, the most special prabhava of Turmeric is that it is skin food: it purifies and nourishes the blood and skin so that the glow of health is not attenuated by blemishes and impurities but rather amplified through clarity. The classic way to apply Turmeric topically is as an Ubtan where you mix Turmeric with chick-pea flour, sesame or almond oil, a little fresh cream and honey. Turmeric is a great dye and will make your clothes and skin yellowish for a few days so take care when you are applying it. I permanently dyed my Champion juicer yellow after juicing fresh Turmeric just once.

It is known that Turmeric, and especially the Curcumins, inhibits skin cancer, likely due to decreasing the expression of proto-oncogenes. External application stops pain and swelling, heals wounds, and treats many skin diseases ranging from acne to leprosy. For instance, freckles, known as Jhanyin in Sanskrit, is treated by mixing a large spoonful of Turmeric with Banyan or Bodhi tree milk until it is a uniform paste. Seal this in a jar overnight and massage it onto your freckles a half-hour before your morning shower. Since Turmeric is bitter and anti-inflammatory, it is excellent for hot skin diseases, especially wet eczema.

Turmeric as First Aid

When it comes to first-aid, what 'Rescue Remedy' is to flower essences and 'Arnica' is to Homeopathy, Turmeric is to herbalism as it serves as First-Aid in accidents ranging from cuts to concussions. For any trauma this rhizome is an herb of choice as it accelerates the healing of and minimizes the damage from any trauma. Once I was in a hospital in India with a dear friend, an old swami from the Giri lineage, waiting for our friend to be released. Though the friend had suffered some major wounds in an accident, we both felt that the iatrogenic blows were worse. The Swami was outraged and kept saying over and over:

In trauma we always give in a tall glass of hot milk
two spoons each of Haldi and Ghee. This takes care of everything.

By reciting it intensely like a Sanskrit sloka he permanently engraved it into my memory and I have seen this work since many times. Turmeric is a hemostatic, able to stop the bleeding of a wound, and a vulnerary, a great healer of wounds due to being both anti-inflammatory and anti-biotic. Once I was working next to a chef in India preparing a meal when I cut my finger deeply. She put some Turmeric in a small cup and had me press my bleeding finger into it. After a few seconds I took my finger out and the bleeding stopped. The wound never bled again and healed quickly. I am still amazed every time I use this trick for cuts and lacerations.

Pain and Inflammation

Through Love all Pain becomes Medicine. (Rumi)

Turmeric is an excellent anti-inflammatory herb and therefore is very good treatment for arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, injuries, trauma, and stiffness from both under activity and over activity. If used before and after any surgery it will decrease the pain and inflammation and accelerate the healing and the return to balance. Though Yogis minimize the use of pungents, they do use Turmeric for many reasons, one being it is so good for the tendons and ligaments. It helps them to attain and hold asanas and to avoid injuries. In the same way it minimizes the pain and inflammation related to any kind of exercise or strenuous activity. Perhaps Turmeric's most important anti-inflammatory mechanism centers on its effects on the Prostaglandins (PGs), a large family of potent lipids produced by the body. PG1 and PG3 calm the body while PG2 inflames the body. Turmeric is a potent inhibitor of

cyclooxygenase 5-lipoxygenase and also 5-HETE production in neutrophils. Reducing these enzymes means less arachidonic acid metabolism, which means less PG2, which means less pain and inflammation.

Blood, Liver and Heart

A great alternative, Ayurveda uses Turmeric to purify and move the blood, for instance in the uterus during the menstrual cycle. Curcumin is actually very similar to one of the active molecules in Chaparral, a great Native American blood purifier. Turmeric also protects your liver from toxins and pathogens. It is known to both destroy major hepatoxins, like aflatoxin, and to rebuild the liver after being attacked by hepatoxins. Turmeric increases the secretion of bile, promotes bilification, and may prevent cholelithiasis. If you drink more alcohol than your body can handle, you may want take a lot of Turmeric to help your liver overcome the consequences of your habit. Traditionally about 5 grams of Turmeric is taken with a glass of whey, morning and evening, for a month to activate and rebuild a liver. Kutki (*Picrorrhiza kurroa*) from Tibet is my favorite liver herb in Ayurveda, but Turmeric would not be far behind due to its versatility. A good liver remedy could be based on Turmeric, Kutki root, and Milk Thistle seeds. Turmeric helps to create new blood so it is good for anemia and other deficient conditions.

Turmeric supports the heart in many ways. For instance, there are platelets that flow in the blood whose job it is to form blood clots when we are wounded. The stress of being wounded causes the platelets to accumulate and stick together. In these days we experience a lot of the same stress without being wounded and our platelets start sticking together increasing the chance of a heart attack or stroke. Turmeric is known to inhibit this. Turmeric also removes cholesterol from the liver and inhibits its assimilation, which means that it gives your heart double protection from cholesterol.

The Respiratory System

After beauty and blood purification, support of the respiratory system is one of the main traditional uses of Turmeric. As an anti-oxidant it protects the lungs from pollution and toxins. It also helps the oxygen transfer from the lungs to the blood. Turmeric with ghee is traditionally used to get rid of cough and to treat asthma. If you feel that you are prone to an attack take 4-5 grams of Turmeric in ghee with a large glass of warm water. A more potent folk remedy involves roasting whole Turmeric rhizomes and mixing the ash with black pepper, rock salt, Bamboo leaves, and Babul resin. Though initially counterintuitive, Turmeric boiled in milk does treat coughs and colds and decongests sinuses. Turmeric is a very good choice for bronchitis and other pulmonary infections, especially when taken with fresh garlic. Fry a tablespoon of Turmeric in ghee with a little cumin and add a few cloves of minced garlic after taking it off the heat. Yes, this food is good medicine. Smoking Turmeric is also used to destroy lung infections as well as hiccups. Turmeric is burned and inhaled through the nose to get rid of colds and to calm hysterical fits and it used to smudge scorpion stings and other Rahuian bites. For stuffed up noses try gargling with warm Turmeric tea for a minute and then blow your nose. Repeat this four or five times. With long pepper Turmeric becomes a lung tonic.

I realize that the thyroid is not typically considered part of the respiratory system in Western Medicine, but in Ayurveda, it is a physical manifestation of the Vishuddhi, the throat Chakra, which governs the flow of the breath in many ways. Standard doses of Turmeric, a couple grams 2-3x/day, increases in the weight of the thyroid.

The Awesome Anti-Oxidant

Oxidation by free radicals is linked with accelerated aging and virtually every major chronic disease including atherosclerosis, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, cataracts, and rheumatoid arthritis. One way to stop this is with anti-oxidants like Vitamin C and E and Turmeric. A second way is with certain enzymes which engage the free radicals and destroy their ability to react. Working double time, the curcuminoids as anti-oxidants are 8 times stronger than vitamin E and also increase the number and activity of free radical destroying enzymes, like superoxide dismutase, catalase and glutathione peroxidase.. This means Turmeric is good at keeping you feeling and looking young; protecting you from mutating cells, tumors and cancer; preventing and removing oxidized cholesterol thereby preventing heart attacks; and reducing pain and acute (injuries) and chronic inflammations (arthritis).

Bugs

Taken internally or used externally Turmeric is anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-parasitic, and anthelmintic (anti-worm). The essential oil, the water extract, and the extracted curcumins all show this activity. It interferes with the ability of microbes and viruses to replicate themselves and it increases your Immune system's ability to fight the infection. It kills many bacteria in vivo and in vitro including staph and salmonella so it is great against staph infections and food poisoning. The fresh juice Turmeric is often used for many antibiotic applications such as wounds or whenever an antiseptic is needed. As an antibiotic Turmeric has been compared with penicillin on gram positive organisms and with streptomycin on gram negative organisms. In both cases Turmeric came in second but gave a strong showing.

Turmeric protects you from parasites that can cause so many mental and physical problems, including poor digestion. Though Turmeric inhibits *E. histolytica*, *E. coli* and *Giardia*, I have used it more often to normalize the GI after treating an intestinal infection with other strong anti-parasites such as Kutaj, Clove, and Black Cumin. Turmeric is also used for worms and of its Sanskrit names, Krimighni, means "Worm Killer". In this case it combines

with Neem and Vaididong (*Embelia ribes*).

Turmeric is relatively broad spectrum anti-fungal. One must remember that even though an herb is anti-fungal, it does not necessarily mean that it has a total spectrum or even broad spectrum of action on fungal infections. Each herb will have a different anti-fungal profile, and in fact, Turmeric has a different profile depending on whether you are using the oil or the extracted Curcumins.

When a virus replicates the 'long terminal repeat' (LTR) sequence is activated. Without this activation there can be no replication of a virus like the HIV. Harvard research proves the Curcumins to be powerful inhibitors of HIV LTR. Turmeric and the Curcumins have also been shown to help the Immune system's T-cells survive and thrive, another strong anti-AIDS mechanism. If I was HIV positive I would not rely solely on the Curcumins to protect me, but I would certainly use a lot of it in my treatment.

Turmeric .vs. Cancer

Turmeric is considered to be anti-cancer because it has a triple action: It neutralizes those substances and conditions which can cause cancer; It directly helps a cell retain its integrity if threatened by carcinogens; If a tumor does grow the Curcumins can often destroy it. Turmeric was recently nominated by the National Cancer Institute for study. Even if one was going the allopathic route to treat their cancer, they can still use Turmeric to increase the effectiveness and decrease some of the side effects of cancer treatments. Ayurveda especially recommends Turmeric for cancers of the female reproductive system, namely breast and uterine cancer, and to treat benign tumors as well.

Topoisomerase Enzyme Inhibition

There are many reasons why Turmeric helps to destroy cancer and parasites. One of the keys to this activity is the ability of the Curcumins to inhibit the Topoisomerase enzyme, which is required for the replication of cancer and parasite cells. Topoisomerase site of action is within the nucleus of the cell, where it first binds to supercoiled DNA and then catalyzes the passage of one DNA helix through another via a transient double-stranded break. This splits the DNA and thus allows cell replication to occur. Stopping Topoisomerase stops replication which stops the spread of the problem.

The Spice of Life

"Let your food be your medicine." (Hippocrates)

This Greek statement is a very basic principle in Ayurveda and likely came to Greece through Persian doctors. Like no other food Turmeric exemplifies this principle. To most people in India, from housewives to Himalyan hermits, Turmeric, affectionately called the 'kitchen queen,' is the main spice of the kitchen. In practically everything I have ever eaten in India, from Idli Sambar in Tamil cafés to Jal Frezi in Mumbai Hyatts to rice and dahl with Sadhus in caves at 15,000 feet, Haldi is right there. Turmeric adds a literal meaning to the phrase, 'The Spice of Life'. Curries are both a staple and delicacy of the Indian way of life for as long as there has been history, and Turmeric is usually the main spice in any curry. One of the main dishes in India is Kitcheree, basically rice, mung beans, Turmeric, and ghee. There are as many variations of Kitcheree as there are cooks in India so there is ample room for experimentation around this central theme. Kitcheree is famous for both its cleansing and nourishing action on the entire body. Usually cleansing and nourishing are opposite therapies, but in the case of Kitcheree, and Triphala, both are possible at once, and hence it is one of the most recommended foods in Ayurveda.

Detox and PK

Turmeric detoxifies the body/mind and in this way helps the body cure itself. One sure sign of this is that it increases the level of the enzyme glutathione S-transferase (GST), which is essential to detoxification. Turmeric is one of the dashemani, the 10 best herbs to treat poisoning and to purify. This is important as one of the Ayurvedic doctor's main jobs was to keep the Royalty healthy and alive and one of the primary health threats was poisoning. Turmeric is such a deep purifier that it, like Tulsi, can ostensibly purify at the chakra level. Long term use of Turmeric, Tulsi and Triphala can be likened to a short term Panch Karma treatment.

Turmeric for Diabetes

Turmeric is an important herb in most Ayurvedic treatments of diabetes as it lowers blood sugar, increases glucose metabolism and potentates insulin activity more than three-fold. It serves both diabetics and those of us who binge on sweets. Part of the action might be due to its chromium content.

Ears, Eyes, Nose and Mouth

Due to its astringent, anti-biotic and anti-inflammatory properties, it is excellent for the teeth, in the form of a toothpaste or simply in your food. It tones the gums and destroys bacteria whose acidic wastes cause cavities. For toothaches or tooth decay, a standard remedy is a Turmeric and Clove paste.

Turmeric dust, with alum 1:20, is blown into the ear to treat chronic otorrhea. You can mix a pinch of Turmeric with organic ghee and apply it to the mucus lining of your nose to stop the sniffles. This also works for stopping nosebleeds, helps to clear the sinuses, restore a more acute sense of smell, and helps to purify the mind and brain.

One of the main causes of eye disease, especially cataracts, is the oxidation of lens in your eyes. Turmeric taken internally decreases the oxidation of the lens by causing a significant induction of glutathione-S-transferase isozyme rGST8-8 in the lens epithelium. That sentence may sound like Greek to us but it looks good to our eyes. It basically means that Turmeric helps to maintain the shape and integrity of our eyes. Traditionally a Turmeric/water decoction, 1:20, is used to treat conjunctivitis and eye disease in general. Soak a cloth in the decoction and then cover the eye with it. This helps to relieve the pain as well.

There is an eye-lotion called Mamira whose principle ingredient is Turmeric. Many elders in India attribute their great eyesight to the use of this traditional lotion. You won't believe how it is made. After placing two Turmeric rhizomes in a carved out hole in a Neem tree for about 6 weeks, take them out and grind them into a fine powder. Add a little camphor and rose water and you have Mamira. Apply it to the lower eyelid the same way eye shadow is applied. Folklore has it that this not only maintains visual acuity but can actually reverse certain types of blindness. Another version of this is to add Neem sprouts and the milk from a Bodhi tree. Grind this all together by hand for a week, each day adding new Bodhi tree milk. Legend is that this will make even the dullest eyes sparkle, after all, the Bodhi tree ostensibly helped Buddha attain his vision of the Absolute Great Perfection. I do realize that most people reading this may never see a Bodhi or Neem tree, not to mention even a whole Turmeric rhizome, yet it feels good to mention it just to keep the Old Ways alive.

Turmeric for your Stomach and Intestines

Turmeric treats the entire Gastro-Intestinal (GI) system. It is traditionally used for weak stomachs, poor digestion, dyspepsia, to normalize metabolism, to help digest protein, and to increase the bio-availability of food and the ability of the stomach to withstand digestive acids.

Turmeric is a great carminative, able to calm an upset digestive system by getting rid of gas and distention. Carminatives also tend to increase absorption and nurture the intestinal flora. According to Ayurveda, plants that treat digestion are often the most important herbs of all since digestion is the basis of mental and physical health. Turmeric is one of the best carminatives because though it leans towards being heating-pungent, it is very balanced and does not aggravate any of the doshas if taken in normal amounts, a few grams per day. Just taking Turmeric in capsules will work fine to balance an upset digestion though one folk remedy is to take a small spoonful of Turmeric and stir it in a cup of yoghurt right after lunch.

As a vulnerary it helps to nurture and heal mucous membranes and has a strong protective effect against food and materials that are corrosive to the stomach and intestines. Turmeric reduces the intensity of cysteamine-induced duodenal ulcers, increases the gastric wall mucus, and also normalizes gastric juices. Turmeric with Flaxseed oil, 'Alsi til' in Hindi, can be used to treat hemorrhoids by both ingestion and topical application. Another traditional remedy for 'piles' is to directly apply a mixture of mustard oil, Turmeric, and onion juice. To stop rectal bleeding take a 2 or 3 tablespoons of Turmeric every half hour until the bleeding stops, usually in an hour.

I always use Turmeric during and after anti-parasite cures to help normalize the GI after it had been totally upset with an amoebic infection. It helps to re-establish the GI flora as well. Often GI parasites can cause colitis which is little, and not so little, ulcers in the GI wall. Turmeric the vulnerary quickly patches up the holes while Turmeric the anti-biotic removes the infection. To treat the diarrhea and dysentery of an acute GI infection use ten grams of Turmeric in a cup of yogurt.

Female Reproductive System

Turmeric regulates menses, decreases intensity and pain of periods, decreases amenorrhea and decreases uterine tumors. Basically, it gets the uterus moving and back on a steady rhythm. Though I have not seen any technical paper on Turmeric's effects on hormones, I feel that all its liver and uterine activities help to balance those hormones which when out of balance can cause breakouts and disharmonious periods. Turmeric is a mild and supportive uterine stimulant. It will also help to normalize menstruation as it removes stagnant blood.

There are so many birthing tricks alive and well in India, and Turmeric plays an important role among them. It is great to take when you are pregnant in that the child will be benefited and traditionally it is said that then the child will always have beautiful skin. However, since it is a mild uterine stimulant there is a chance of over stimulation, so it is very advisable for any pregnant woman who would like to use Turmeric to see a qualified practitioner first. Generally, women with more Kapha in their constitutions will be able to take Turmeric more often than a woman who has Vata dominating. Regardless of dosha, in the last two weeks of pregnancy all Mothers can take two to three grams per day, or four to six capsules, with warm organic milk. This old remedy is reputed to not only simplify the birth while increasing the health of Mother and Child as well. Being an excellent analgesic Turmeric decreases the pain of birth, sort of like an herbal epidural, except it has excellent side effects and does not move the Mother and Child onto the slippery slope of exponentially increasing allopathic intervention as epidural anesthesia tends to do.

Turmeric and Yoga

For many reasons Turmeric is also one of the best herbs/foods of Yoga: It is one of the most potent purifying herbs in Ayurveda, cleansing all the bodies including physical and subtle, from muscles to marmas; It is one of the safest

herbs; It increases flexibility; It reduces pain and inflammation from workouts which means it allows more opportunity to perfect asanas, stay in asanas longer and stay in asanas with greater ease, more sukha and sthira; It increases Prana, the flow of Prana and purifies Prana. Yoga scriptures like the Shiva Samhita recommends that a Yogi take some ghee and milk before asana and pranayama practice, and many traditional yogis add Turmeric to that.

Summary by Dr. David Frawley

"If I had only a single herb to depend upon for all possible health and dietary needs, I would without much hesitation choose the Indian spice Turmeric. There is little that it cannot do in the realm of healing and much that no other herb is able to accomplish. Turmeric has a broad spectrum of actions, mild but certain effects, and is beneficial for long term and daily usage. Though it is a common spice, few people, including herbalists know of its great value and are using it to the extent possible. It is an herb that one should get to know and live with.

Turmeric gently stimulates the digestive fire and makes the food easier to digest and absorb. It also helps detoxify the food. In addition it improves the quality of food, adding nutritive and blood building properties to the oils with which it combines, particularly ghee (clarified butter), with which it has an important affinity. It is essential to Ayurvedic diets. In addition Turmeric is a great woman's herb and is helpful for many gynecological problems. It mildly promotes menstruation, relieves menstrual pain and cramping, is great for countering PMS, and helps build the blood. It helps guard against or even remove cysts in the breast or uterus, and is a good guard against breast cancer. In addition it helps beautify the skin and improve the complexion, promoting circulation and nutrition to the surface of the body. It vitalizes the body's own natural healing energy through its action of strengthening digestion and circulation, and aiding in the regulation of all bodily systems. For all these reasons Turmeric is likened to the Divine Mother, bestowing numerous blessings and helping us in all dangers, difficulties and conditions of weakness and debility."

Acknowledgments

Obvious to the most causal observer this article has no references, but indeed it does. There are over 500 references available at 888.550.VEDA that are not included here for brevity. I would also like to thank Dr David Frawley for his apt summary and review, and also Dr Dinesh Sharma, and the Staff of 'Light on Ayurveda,' for reviewing this article for accuracy.

Biography

After studying Vedic Sciences in India for most of the 90's, Prashanti is now on the board of the California Association of Ayurvedic Medicine, ayurveda-caam.org; on the staff at the Rishikesh College of Ayurveda, ayurishi.com, and has been helping to direct a large ayurvedic organic herb project in India and the U.S. since 1993, omorganics.com.

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