

INTRODUCTION

A) Introduction to the chemistry of curcumin

1. introduction and scope

INDIA has a rich history of using plants for medicinal purposes. Turmeric (*Curcuma longa* L.) is a medicinal plant extensively used in Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha medicine as home remedy for various diseases.^{1,2} *C. longa* L., botanically related to ginger (Zingiberaceae family), is a perennial plant having a short stem with large oblong leaves and bears ovate, pyriform or oblong rhizomes, which are often branched and brownish-yellow in colour. Turmeric is used as a food additive (spice), preservative and colouring agent in Asian countries, including China and South East Asia. It is also considered as auspicious and is a part of religious rituals. In old Hindu medicine, it is extensively used for the treatment of sprains and swelling caused by injury.¹ In recent times, traditional Indian medicine uses turmeric powder for the treatment of biliary disorders, anorexia, coryza, cough, diabetic wounds, hepatic disorders, rheumatism and sinusitis.³

In China, *C. longa* is used for diseases associated with abdominal pains.⁴ The colouring principle of turmeric is the main component of this plant and is responsible for the anti-inflammatory property. Turmeric was described as *C. longa* by Linnaeus and its taxonomic position is as follows:

Class Liliopsida

Subclass Commelinids

Order Zingiberales

Family Zingiberaceae

Genus *Curcuma*

Species *Curcuma longa*