

Adi kekir (*Zingiber siangensis*) - A symbol of purity and protection

Osinam Jamoh¹, Soma Bori², Kasinam Doruk³

Himalayan University, Jollang, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India

Abstract

Adi Kekir is an indigenous ginger variety cultivated in the East Siang, Siang, and Upper Siang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. It is valued for its distinct aroma, medicinal properties, and rich oil content. Besides its use in traditional cuisine and health practices, Adi Kekir holds cultural and ritual significance among the Adi community, symbolizing indigenous knowledge and traditional lifestyles. Its Geographical Indication (GI) recognition highlights its regional uniqueness and supports the conservation of traditional agriculture and biodiversity.

Keywords: Adi Kekir, Indigenous ginger, Adi tribes, Arunachal Pradesh, Traditional rituals, Medicinal value, Geographical Indication (GI), Cultural heritage, Ethnobotany, Sustainable agriculture.

1. Introduction

Adi Kekir (*Zingiber siangensis*) is a premium indigenous variety of ginger cultivated in the East Siang, Siang, and Upper Siang districts of Arunachal Pradesh, India. It is traditionally grown by the Adi tribe using organic and indigenous farming practices, particularly under shifting cultivation systems on hill slopes. The crop is valued for its strong aroma, distinctive taste, and relatively high oil content compared to other ginger varieties. Adi Kekir is widely used in traditional food preparations and ethnomedicinal practices, where it is believed to aid digestion, boost immunity, and relieve inflammation and pain. In 2024, Adi Kekir received the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag, recognizing its unique geographical origin and cultural heritage associated with the indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh (The Week, 2024). The cultivation and use of Adi Kekir reflect the traditional knowledge systems and sustainable agricultural practices preserved by the Adi community for generations (India Today NE, 2024).





Fig 1.1: Adi Kekir (*Zingiber siangensis*)



2. Origin and Cultivation Characteristics

Adi Kekir is primarily cultivated in the Siang valley region of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly in East Siang, Siang, and Upper Siang districts. The crop grows well in humid tropical and subtropical climates at altitudes ranging from approximately 300 to 900 meters above mean sealevel. Farmers cultivate it using traditional jhum or shifting cultivation practices, which involve minimal external inputs and rely mainly on organic soil fertility and natural ecological processes.

3. Characteristics of Adi Kekir

1. Local Name	Adi Kekir
2. Crop Type	Indigenous traditional crop cultivated by local tribal communities
3. Adaptability	Well adapted to humid tropical and hilly agro-climatic conditions
4. Growth Habit	Hardy plant with good environmental stress tolerance
5. Cultivation System	Traditionally grown under jhum (shifting) cultivation
6. Soil Requirement	Suitable for moderately fertile, well-drained hill soils
7. Altitude Adaptation	Grows well at 300–900 m above mean sea level
8. Input Requirement	Requires low external inputs; mainly organic management
9. Pest and Disease Tolerance	Shows natural tolerance to local pests and diseases
10. Cultural Importance	Important component of traditional food and indigenous culture
11. Sustainability Role	Supports biodiversity conservation and sustainable agriculture

Medicinal Importance

Like other ginger species belonging to the family Zingiberaceae, Adi Kekir possesses several medicinal properties. Traditionally, it is used to treat digestive disorders, respiratory problems, and inflammatory conditions. Ginger-based preparations are widely used in indigenous medicine for relieving stomach discomfort, cough, cold, and nausea. The bioactive compounds present in ginger, such as gingerols and shogaols, contribute to its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial properties (Phukon, 2024).

Ritualistic and Traditional Uses of Adi Kekir Symbolic

Protection:

Adi Kekir is traditionally regarded as a protective plant due to its strong aroma and pungent nature. Among indigenous communities, it is believed to ward off negative energies and provide spiritual protection during important cultural activities.

Ritualistic Importance:

The plant plays a significant role in traditional rituals and ceremonial practices. It is commonly used in cultural events performed to seek prosperity, blessings, and community well-being, reflecting its deep ethnobotanical importance.

Cultural Food Practices:

Adi Kekir is frequently incorporated into traditional cuisine, often prepared with hard-boiled eggs and served during festivals and special occasions, symbolizing cultural identity and communal bonding.

Ethnomedicinal Role:

Beyond ritual use, Adi Kekir is included in traditional healing preparations and herbal mixtures. Its high aromatic oil content contributes to its perceived therapeutic and health-promoting properties in indigenous healthcare practices.

Conclusion

The successful cultivation of Adi Kekir at Himalayan University, Jollang, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, marks a significant step toward the conservation and promotion of this indigenous plant. Under the valuable guidance of Dr. Kasinam Doruk, the crop was successfully grown under local agro-climatic conditions, demonstrating its adaptability and cultivation potential. This initiative supports the preservation of traditional knowledge while encouraging future research and sustainable utilization of Adi Kekir.

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