

"The Glowing Glory of UBTAN" (this article was sent to me by a client who could not remember where it came from, if anyone knows please tell us and we can officially recognize the author)
- FROM VEDAS TO SPACE AGE -

'Ubtan' in itself means local application, which is a body application used for the beautification of the body, dating back to the remotest antiquity and is the legacy of the rich Indian Heritage. The ritual of 'Ubtan', also known as 'Battne di Rasam' in Punjabi, and 'Kappumanjal' in Tamil is one of the vital components of the concept of 'Solah-Shringaar' (Sixteen ways of beautification of body). The principal acting constituents of ancient 'Ubtan' used in rituals are Turmeric, Bengal Gram & Sandalwood. Turmeric, commonly called Haldi in India, is also known as Haridra (that which corrects the complexion of skin), Kaanchani (Golden gracious), Nisha (beautifying like moonlit night), Varvarnini (complexion enhancer), Gauri (Fairing), Yoshitpriya (soft for skin applications), Hatt-vilasini (The decorative pride of bazaar) in Sanskrit and by virtue of its complexion enhancing, healing, antiseptic & skin caring properties, it forms an extremely useful component of Ubtan. Sandalwood commonly called as Chandan in India, is also known as Gandhasaar (de-odorant) in Sanskrit and because of its Daahprashaman (soothing) and Varnya (complexion improving) properties, it helps in providing coolant & deodorizing effect to the skin. Bengal Gram, commonly called as Chana in India is Ruksha-gunam (dry properties) possessing Lekhan (scrubbing) action because of its rich fibrous content, and due to which upon local applications, it is instrumental in deep cleansing of the pores of skin.

As a ritual, Ubtan is the traditional components' powder along with Saffron which is blended with Mustard Oil to make a thin dough. This dough-paste is applied to the whole body for 25 to 30 minutes thereafter scrubbed before taking the customary bath. It helps to improve and tighten sagging skin and keeps the skin glowing for a long time. Ubtan has received credence as a ritual in Hindu as well as Punjabi Muslim Marriages as this is the first ceremony that marks the beginning of bridal makeup and customary dressing up of brides and bridegrooms both. 'Ubtan', used to provide an enchanting look to the skin, is applied by the brides & bridegrooms while reciting 'Ved Mantras' or traditional folk songs, as an important ritual of marriages in India. This paste is prepared in various ways to make the skin fair and to nourish it from within. On the occasion of social and religious festivals, preparation of 'Ubtan' itself is a fairly enjoyable task for ladies in India.

It is believed that during Vedic era, it was being prescribed by the Vedic Physicians for the protection, nourishment & beautification of the skin. The apparent results obtained with the application of 'Ubtan' gave it a wide-spread publicity by which perhaps it became a fashionable routine for men & women, those days, to apply it for the beautification of skin and later on established its credence as a ritual for brides & bridegrooms before marriage.

To look beautiful has been an obsession with men and women alike throughout the ages but it differs from one land to another and also according to the time and mode of living. The desire of looking enchantingly beautiful laid the foundation of world's first known natural cosmetic – 'Ubtan', initially started as a ritual in India. In earlier days, it was also customary to make special cosmetics for ladies of high rank and social classes, based on Ubtan by adding several other aromatic herbs, yoghurt, milk cream, honey and essence of flowers. Various other ingredients are also added like petals of rose and jasmine, Khus-Khus, drop of lemon juice and other herbs to get uniquely beautifying applications as face and body packs. Such applications are blended from optimum concentrations of powdered extracts obtained from Sandalwood, Turmeric, Walnut, Mustard, Red Sandalwood, Neem Bark, Orange Peels, Bengal Gram, Yashad Bhasam (Calcined ash obtained from Natural Zinc Ore), Fuller's earth and various other clays. Clays have absorbed the sun rays and remnants of plants & minerals of the earth over thousands of years, by virtue of which have gained immense healing & rejuvenating properties. Similar to their own ageless properties, Clays provide an anti-aging & rejuvenating effect to the skin and which in itself is a complete treatment for all skin problems. The clay has an astringent and stimulating effect and removes impurities from the skin while cleansing and has a marked effect on skin epidermis. Clay is a rich source of calcium, potassium, sodium and it energises the connecting tissue and with its desquamating action, removes the dead cells.

'Ubtan' is a powerful exfoliating treatment also that stimulates the underlying tissues of the skin. Upon scientific researches of its ingredients, it has been found that the 'Ubtan' not only enhances beauty, but also possesses definite medicinal values by virtue of its antifungal, antibacterial, antiperspirant, deodorant & skin-toning properties, thereby ruling out the possibilities of skin infections. It serves the multi-purpose role of cleanser, astringent, stimulant, and skin-tonic, all at

the same time. By its revitalising, refreshing & refining actions, 'Ubtan' helps in the glowing of complexion and making it appear luscious. It also gives protection from various skin problems including acne, pimples, blemishes, white patches, freckles, blackheads, etc. Its regular usage prevents the occurrence of premature wrinkles, removes scars, & helps to lighten the open pores. The natural ingredients of 'Ubtan' build up flabby and drooping tissues, improve blood circulation & skin texture, provide anti-aging, anti-wrinkle, anti-rash, anti-blemishing, anti-bacterial, anti-tanning effects to the skin and nourish it.

The scientific virtue of various herbs & minerals used in Ubtan based applications, also prove the rationale of ancient beliefs. As a beauty aid, Curcumin - the alkaloidal content of the main ingredient of Ubtan, Turmeric prevents and cures pigmentation, maintains the PH balance and makes the skin glow. Santalol in Sandal-wood helps in inhibiting the growth of micro-organisms and preventing skin infections. The woody fibre & Vitamin C in Bengal gram open the blocked pores, maintain the secretions from glands and bleach the sun freckles. Due to its Sandalwood contents, 'Ubtan' acts as an astringent and helps to tighten the pores. The crocetin contents of Saffron add to the lustre of the skin and make it glow. The rough nature of Bengal gram powder cleanses it by removing the dead infected parts of the skin. Ubtan is also used to promote healing of the cracked & inflamed skin besides protecting it from varied skin problems including scabies, skin eruptions, itching, erysipelas, prickly heat, copious perspiration, unwanted blemishes, eruptions & premature wrinkles etc. In a nutshell, besides its beauty enhancing action, Ubtan possesses very effective deodorant, desiccant, antiseptic, astringent, deep-cleansing and naturally bleaching properties, without interfering with skin's natural melanin pigment. Usually a free flowing, homogenous paste of the Ubtan powder made with Rose water and applied all over body & face, for about half an hour, or till drying, before bath or shower. Milk or curd (for dry skin) and fresh lemon juice (for oily skin) may also be added in the paste for specific skin types. Upon regular usage, the face & body glitters with extra lustre, fragrance and a new enchanting experience

The glowing glory and the amazing pharmaco-kinetics of 'Ubtan'? Were our ancestors really aware of them? It seems they really were. Hats off to them!