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# Aesthetic Significance of *Solah Shringar* (Sixteen Ornaments) in Unani Medicine

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This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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## ABSTRACT

Ancient people were as passionate about the aesthetics of appearance as are individuals of today. Physical appearance has consistently been an inseparable part of daily human growth, and most individuals prefer to be labelled as beautiful and handsome. The practice of '*Solah Shringar*' comprises sixteen ways of adorning a woman's body in the Hindu as well as Muslim ceremonies in India. The description of *Solah Shringar* is commonly found in the writings of Hindi poets. Different poets and scholars have enlisted various cosmetics in their writings from time to time. In medieval India, the *Solah Shringar* was referred to the seven plus nine items in which seven were connoted as *Haft Qalam Ārāyish* along with other nine ornaments. These sixteen aesthetics have greater relevance with Unani therapeutics. This article is a sincere attempt to critically analyse the therapeutic and cosmetic importance of sixteen ornaments of medieval India in the light of Unani medicine.

Keywords: *Solah Shringar*; *Haft Qalam Ārāyish*; cosmetics; medieval India; Unani; sixteen ornaments.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The three important factors that have the greatest influence on the human relationship are physical attractiveness, sexual appeal and beauty. Physical attractiveness by itself has greater say in one's success, power, satisfaction and happiness in life. The many faces of beauty throughout the centuries have differed from one civilization to the other. Similarly, the roles, parameters, and dimensions of these beauty measures also differed substantially [1].

Diverse cultures have their indigenous methods of beautification. Egyptians used scented oils and ointments meant for cleaning and softening of their skin and masking their body odour. They coloured their skin, body and hair with dyes and paints [2]. Mesopotamians used facial make-up, hair dyes, skin-care ointments, and lotions around 2000 BC. The Indus civilization of 500 BC is reported for the usage of incense and sandalwood as fragrance; Kajal and Kuhl for beautifying the eyelids, and tattooing of forehead and hands [3].

The Romans used facial masks made up of barley, bean flour, eggs, hartshorn, narcissus bulbs, balsam, Tuscan seed, and honey [3]. The Roman poet Ovid of 100 BC proposed three classes of ingredients i.e., demulcent, cleanser, and suspending vehicle in his book "The art of beauty" [4].

The medieval period heralded the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Islamic medicine [3]; Greco-Arab physicians such as Rabban Tabari, Zakariyya Razi, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Nafīs, etc. extensively wrote on the cosmetics as evidenced by their writings. These physicians had a deep knowledge of cosmetics as they introduced facial mask, dermabrasion, skin cleanser, etc. Avicenna highly recommended daily bathing, massages, and aromatic ointments [1,3]. Maimonides wrote a book in Arabic titled "Preservation of Youth" in which he suggested a dietary regimen focused on weight loss, hot water bath, exercise, and aromatic ointments to retain youthfulness [3,5].

The Unani system of medicine owes its immediate origin to ancient Greek (Yūnān) [6]. The roots of this system are connected with Egypt and Mesopotamia as the Greeks adopted it from them. It was further improved and developed by Arabs tremendously. In India, Unani medicine attained sustainable

growth enhancing its education, practice and research. Even in the Middle East and Central Asia, it successfully delivered its principles to the local geo-human environment to become one of the major traditional medical systems [7].

Regionally, some particular types of cosmetics were used for a long time and are still famous which include *Solah Shringār* in India and neighbouring countries and *Haft Qalam Ārāyish* in Iran [8–10].

## 2. SOLAH SHRINGAR

The practice of 'Solah Shringar' comprises sixteen ways of adorning a woman's body in the Hindu as well as Muslim marriages and other ceremonies in India [8,11]. The description of these ornaments is commonly found in the writings of Hindi poets. In medieval India, *Solah Shringar* referred to seven plus nine items in which seven were connoted as *Haft Qalam Ārāyish* with other nine ornaments [12].

Nagendranath Basu has given the following enumerations to these sixteen embellishments:

1. *Ubtan*
2. *Missi Lagana*,
3. *Mahāwar* (Red colour application on nails and soles of the feet as well as on lips)
4. *Kajal/Anjan*
5. Henna
6. *Sugandh (Fragrance)/Argajah/Ghāliya* (a type of paste used to scent the body like a modern perfume or scent)
7. *Chibuk par Til* (Making black spot in the centre of the chin)
8. To paint the lips.
9. *Isnān* (Bath)
10. *Wasan/Wastra Dhāran* (Special clothing e.g., *Choli and Ghagra*)
11. *Kesh Shringar* (Hair Cosmetics)
12. *Sindūr* filling (Application of vermilion on the middle line of the head where the hair is parted.)
13. *Tilak or Bindi* (an ornamental/religious mark/dot placed on the forehead between the eyebrows)
14. *Ābhushan* (Jewelry)
15. *Pushpamal/Gajra* (Garland: a wreath of flowers and leaves, worn on the head or hung as a decoration)
16. *Tambūl* (eating *Pān* as a mouth freshener) [13].

However, the sixteen ornaments described with reference to Amīr Khusraw were seven plus nine i.e.,

1. *Ghāza* (face powder)
2. *Safidāb* (white paint),
3. *Ghāliya* (civet),
4. *Henna*
5. *Surma* (collyrium)
6. *Wasma* (eyebrow makeup)
7. *Khalkhal* (ankle ornament),
8. *Surkhi* (rouge)
9. *Sar-āweza* (head dress or veil),
10. *Gushwāra* (earring),
11. *Silsila* (chain),
12. *Halqa-i-Bīni* (nose ring),
13. *Guluband* (necklace),
14. *Bāzuband* (armlet),
15. *Dastāna* (bracelet),
16. *Angushtar* (ring) [9]

Some authors also described Hār (necklace), Mangal Sūtra, Kamarband (waistband) Bichhiya (toe ring) and Pāyal (anklet) in *Solah Shringar* [14].

Among all these *Ghāza*, *Hinā*, *Surma* (*Kuhl*), *Ghāliya*, *Safidāb*, *Wasma*, *Khāl*, *Ubtan* and *Missī* have greater importance in Unani system of medicine. A concise description of all these ornaments is given as under:

### 3. HAFT QALAM ĀRĀYISH

*Haft Qalam Ārāyish*, also called as *Haftwand* or *Har-haft* ("all seven") traditionally referred to the seven pens/items that composed of the full cosmetic kit for women in Iranian culture [10].

The first recorded reference to the expression, as far as can be ascertained, goes to "*Samak-i Ayyār*" of the ninth century, a well-known literature on romance. At least six items of the *Haft Qalam Ārāyish*, except *Zarak*, are found listed in the early Islamic sources. Also, scholars like Avicenna and Al-Biruni had already given the documented details of individual items such as *Surma*. a century before the *Samak-i Ayyār* was written [10].

*Haft Qalam Ārāyish* consists of the following seven cosmetic items, in no particular order:

1. *Ghāza* (better known as *Surkhāb* or *Surkhī*, lit. "red water," denoting rouge),
2. *Nigār* (or *Hinā*' i.e., henna)
3. *Surma* (*Kuhl*)

4. *Zarak* (gold dust or paillettes used on the face or hair)  
OR  
*Ghāliya* (It was included instead of *Zarak* in some compilations)
5. *Safidāb* (lit. "white water," denoting whitening face makeup)
6. *Wasma* (thick eye makeup used generally for enhancing eyebrows and contours of the eyes)
7. *Khāl* [10]

### 3.1 Ghāza/Surkhāb

*Ghāza* also known as *Surkhāb* or *Gulgunāh*, is referred to any kind of rouge that is applied on the face or lips to make the skin soft, bright and reddened. Initially, it was made from powdered hematite or red marble, or, more frequently, from the plain red earth, to which a natural red dye like *Rūnās* (madder) would have been added. Archeologists in Iran found very small metal bowls or saucers painted red, i.e. believed to have contained *Ghāza* for lips or cheeks [10].

In the Unani system of medicine, *Ghāza* is defined as a fine powder of drugs applied on the face and body to improve complexion and 'face powder' is considered its English equivalent [15].

#### 3.1.1 Direction for use

It is used directly on the skin in powder form or may be mixed with plain water or rose water and applied as a paste on the face at bedtime and washed off the next morning. At present, only *Ghāza Husn-i Afza* prepared by Hamdard Laboratories and Kalonji Fairness Cream prepared by *Mohammadia Dawakhana* is being marketed in India [16].

#### 3.1.2 Method of preparation

Fine powder of dried drugs is obtained pounding by mortar and pestle and is preserved in air-tight glass bottles, vials and other glass containers at a neat, clean and dry place. It can also be preserved for a longer period under proper hygienic conditions [17].

#### 3.1.3 Some Unani formulations of Ghāza

##### 3.1.3.1 Ghāza Husn-i Afza

It is used to treat melasma and other marks on the face. Also make the face skin, soft, clean and bright (Table 1) [18].

**Table 1. Composition of Ghāza Husn-i Afza**

Ingredients	Quantity
<i>Post Turanj</i> ( <i>Citrus medica</i> fruit epicarp)	25 g
<i>Tukhm Bāqila Muqashshar</i> ( <i>Vicia faba</i> peeled seed)	250 g
<i>Tukhm Mūlī</i> ( <i>Rafanus sativa</i> seed)	150 g
<i>Jaw</i> ( <i>Hordium vulgare</i> seed)	50 g
<i>Dāl Chanā Muqashshar</i> ( <i>Cicer arietinum</i> seed)	100 g
' <i>Adas Musallm Muqashshar</i> ( <i>Lens culinaris</i> peeled)	50 g
<i>Katīra</i> ( <i>Astragalus gummifera</i> gum)	25 g
<i>Matar</i> ( <i>Pisum sativum</i> )	100 g
<i>Maghz Tukhm Kharpaza</i> ( <i>Cucumis melo</i> seed kernel)	150 g
<i>Nishāsta</i> (Starch)	50 g
' <i>Arq-i Gulab</i> ( <i>Rosa damascena</i> flower distillate)	15 ml

**Preparation:** All dried drugs are powdered and passed through sieve no. 100 to obtain the fine powder. Further, this powder is mixed with 'Arq-i Gulāb and stored in air-tight glass bottle.

**Method of use:** 6g *Ghāza Husn-i Afza* is mixed with water and applied on the face at night and washed off the next morning [18].

### 3.1.3.2 Ghāza-i Musaffi

It is used to obtain the fair complexion of the face and to make the cheek reddened (Table 2) [19].

**Preparation:** Make a fine powder of all drugs and pass it with sieve no. 100.

**Method of use:** Mix it with *Lu'āb-i Alst* (*Linum usitatissimum* mucilage) and apply it to the face at night. The next morning wash it off with decoction of *Gul-i Bābūna* (*Anthemis nobilis* seed) and *Gul-i Banafsha* (*Viola odorata* flower) [19].

### 3.2 Nigār/Hinā

The dried leaves of henna (*Lawsonia inermis*) have been used for centuries in the form of powder to dye skin, hairs and nails. Some

papyrus also revealed the use of henna in ancient Egypt to dye the nails and hairs of mummies. Wearing henna on hands and feet is a tradition for events such as wedding ceremonies and public celebrations in the Middle East. In Persian art, the pictured dancers of wedding procession are portrayed with henna dating between the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Mughals imported henna from Persia in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Further, Rajpoots of Mewar used it by mixing with aromatic oils and applied it on the hands and feet for beautification. Since 1890, henna has been used in Europe for dyeing the hairs [20].

Henna (*Lawsonia inermis*) belongs to Lythraceae family which is the best known source for natural dyes (Fig. 1). Henna is deciduous, 2 to 6 m high shrub with acuminate leaves, yellowish-white to brick red flowers, blue-black angular small seeds and the fruit is a dry berry. The active ingredient of henna is lawsone (2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone) [20].

Henna is still in use by both women and men to paint fingernails, hands, and feet in russet colour or to strengthen and beautify hair (including beard).

**Table 2. Composition of Ghāza-i Musaffi**

Ingredients	Quantity
<i>Ārad-i Jaw</i> ( <i>Hordeum vulgare</i> flour)	100 g
<i>Istakhwān Bosīda</i> (decomposed bones of animal)	100 g
<i>Ārad Biranj</i> ( <i>Oryza sativa</i> flour)	100 g
<i>Maghz Tukhm Kharpaza</i> ( <i>Cucumis melo</i> seed kernel)	100 g
<i>Habb al-Bān</i> ( <i>Melia azadirachta</i> seeds)	100 g
<i>Qust Shīrīn</i> ( <i>Saussurea lappa</i> root) in equal quantity.	100 g



**Fig. 1. Leaves of henna (*Lawsonia inermis*) (by J.M.Garg licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)**

On the other hand, the application of complex patterns employing henna-based preparation is called *Nigār*, temporary henna tattoo or *Mehndi* [10,20]. Some persons use it as a reminder of happiness and some use it for its aphrodisiac property. It is also worn as a form of blessing [20].

### **3.2.1 Method of use**

The dried leaves of henna are pounded in mortar to make a fine powder. Afterwards, a homogenous paste is made by mixing of water to it. Further, oils, lime juice and other ingredients may be added to enhance the colour and perfume. The paste is applied on the skin with fingers or a cone-shaped container made up of polythene or soft plastic and left to dry for some time to give an orange-red dye [20,21]. Palms and backs of hands and feet are stained in intricate patterns for religious festivities, weddings and birthdays. Henna is also popularly used as hair colour and for dyeing cloth [21]. Besides this, different methods and formulations

are used to achieve different outcomes in certain diseases [22].

### **3.2.2 Medicinal use of plant**

The plant was used as medicine both internally and externally. In Unani medicine, henna leaves, flowers and seeds are advocated to treat many diseases e.g. hair fall [23], scabies [24], psoriasis [25,26], leprosy [23,27,28], open wound [29], jaundice [25,29], hepatitis [25,29], nephrolithiasis [29,30], urolithiasis [29,30], dysuria [25,29], dysmenorrhea [26], headache [23,28] and rhinitis [22,23,28]. The ancient Egyptians are said to have used oil extracted from the flowers to keep their limbs supple [20].

### **3.2.3 Different types of henna**

Common types of henna included: henna from the north, henna from the fields, henna from the meadow, henna from the marshes. Also “thorns of henna”, “knots of henna”, and “henna grass” are parts of the plant specific to age and growth

cycle, which again have different characteristics [20].

### 3.2.4 Side effects of *Nigār*

*Nigār* or temporary henna tattoos have become increasingly popular in Western countries but some allergic reactions are also reported [31]. It is also evident that pure/natural henna has a very low allergic potential as it takes several hours to be absorbed into the skin, imparting a brownish-orange colour [20]. There are only few reports concerning allergic reactions due to pure henna [32]. Although to produce the varieties of colours and to decrease application time, different types of ingredients are added in natural henna including para-phenylenediamine (PPD), coffee or black tea, lemon juice, eucalyptus, clove, or mustard oil or fresh urine of camel and yaks. All these ingredients within the henna paste could be responsible for allergic skin reactions [20].

In most cases, Para-phenylenediamine (PPD) is responsible for the complications reported after henna tattoos i.e. contact dermatitis either localized or generalized, keloid scars, and temporary or permanent hyperpigmentation or hypopigmentation [33]. More rarely, type I hypersensitivity reactions (urticaria, angioedema, or anaphylaxis) with potentially lethal outcomes have been reported [34].

### 3.2.5 Precaution

Patch testing for PPD must be performed at a very diluted concentration (0.01% in vaseline) to avoid unnecessarily strong reactions and sensitization to PPD [34].

## 3.3 *Surma/Kuhl/Atwad*

*Surma* or *Kuhl* is the oldest and geographically most widely used item of *Haft Qalam* [10]. It was used for therapeutic as well as magico-ritual purposes in ancient Egypt [35].

The old papyri contain numerous prescriptions for the ailments of eyelids, iris and cornea such as trachoma and conjunctivitis [10]. The Ebers papyrus contains about one hundred formulations in which green malachite, black galena, but also red ochre, lapis lazuli, and some unidentified minerals figure prominently [10].

The word "*Kuhl*" is Arabic in origin as Arabic oculist called it "*Kahal*" [35]. It is believed that *Kuhl* was invented by Pythagoras [36].

Different terms have been used to denote it, such as collyrium by ancient Egyptians; kollurion by Romans and Greeks; *Kuhl* or *Kuhl/Kahal* by Arabs as well as Egyptians; *Sagal Surma* by Iranians and *Anjan, Sauviranjan, Shurma, Surmi*, and *Surma* in Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and the chief constituent was galena (lead sulphide) [35].

### 3.3.1 Composition of *Kuhl*

*Kuhl* is an ultra-fine powder used externally to strengthen eyesight and cure eye ailments [15]. It is obtained from *Kuhl* stone (galena) or powdered iron ore. Some other ingredients from herbal (e.g., *Nīm (Azadirachta indica)*, *Za'frān (Crocus sativus)*, *Māmīrā (Coptis teeta)*, *Arq-e-Gulāb (Rosa damascene flower distillate)* and *Badiyān (Foeniculum vulgare)*, etc.), mineral (e.g. zinc oxide, silver leaves, gold leaves and gemstone etc.) and marine origin (e.g., coral, coral reef and pearls, etc.) are also mixed for therapeutic purpose [35].

Sometimes, *Kuhl* is mixed with water or appropriate liquid before application as in the case of *Kahal Chikni Dawā* [16]. *Sang-e-Surmā* (Antimony) is the basic ingredient of *Kahal*, but its presence in the formula is not necessary [16]. *Surma* was obtained from a variety of substances, though mainly from powdered iron ore in Iran, also it was obtained by grinding a shiny stone (i.e. antimony) until the formation of soot-like substance.

### 3.3.2 Use of *Kuhl*

*Kuhl* is used cosmetologically to add depth and dimension to the eyes and therapeutically for low eyesight, soreness, and redness of the eye. Some specialized types of *Kuhl* are indicated for other eye ailments such as incipient cataracts, pterygium, xerophthalmia, etc. [16].

### 3.3.3 Method of preparation

*Sang-i Surmā* (Antimony) is ground by mortar and pestle till the sparkle of the particles vanishes. The fineness of powder is tested by rubbing it between the fingers. The process is repeated till extremely fine powder is achieved. Afterwards powder is passed through a fine muslin cloth to obtain the prime quality of *Surmā* [17].

### 3.3.4 General precautions

*Kuhl (Surmā)* should be ground and sieved to the highest degree of fineness; otherwise, it may

irritate the eye and worsen the condition. When rubbed between the fingers, *Kuhl (Surmā)* should not feel coarse [17].

### 3.3.5 Storage

*Kuhl (Surmā)* is stored in glass bottles, vials, and other glass vessels at clean and dry places under hygienic conditions [17].

### 3.3.6 Safety reports

Lead sulphide has not as such been reported for toxic injury as it is not assimilated through trans-corneal route. Various studies have found that *Kuhl* is not responsible for increased lead concentration in blood [35].

### 3.4 Zarak

The term *Zarak* implies sprinkling of gold dust over the hairs or pasting the gold paillettes on the forehead and other parts of the face [10]. As *Zarak* had the paillettes made up of gold leaf, the higher cost must have restricted its use and was replaced by lovelocks in the later Qajar period [10].

*Zarak* was later replaced by *Ghāliya* or perfume in *Haft Qalam* listing and *Ghāliya* has substantial significance in Unani medicine [10].

### 3.5 Ghāliya

*Ghāliya* is a mixture of aromatic drugs used for cosmetic and therapeutic purposes [16]. According to Farmanfarmaian F. S. the term *Ghāliya* might be occasionally applied to certain cosmetics based on essences that made up the stock of the '*Attaran*' as the cosmetics were usually sold by the herbalist-perfumer-druggists (*Attārān*) in Iran. *Ghāliya*, made up of "an expensive mixture of musk, oil of myrobalan, black wax and ambergris," was also used for imprinting the *Khāl*, and a yellow *Ghāliya*, containing saffron, was used as cosmetic for

brides. However, the use of *Ghāliya* in a cosmetic context is unusual and can only be explained by the additives such as fragrant oils, essences, etc. [10].

Ibn Sina has described *Ghāliya* as an aromatic drug possessing the resolvent and exhilarant. Moreover, it reduces the earache and is effective in the treatment of epilepsy if used mixing with *Roghan-i Bān (Melia azadirachta oil)* or *Roghan-i Khīrī (Sida rhombifolia oil)*. In addition, the aroma of *Ghāliya* reduces the pain of the uterus caused by coldness [37].

On the other hand, Ibn Sina has also described a formulation of *Ghāliya* for hair dyeing that contains drugs with dyeing properties i.e., *Āmla (Emblica officinalis fruit)*, *Khatmī (Althea officinalis seed)*, *henna (Lawsonia inermis)*, *Zāj Surkh (red alum)* and *Samagh-i Arabī (Acacia arabica gum)* as well as aromatic properties i.e., *Mushk (Moschcus moschiferus secretion of a gland)* [38].

### 3.5.1 Some Unani formulations of Ghāliya

#### 3.5.1.1 Ghāliya with Muqawwi-i Qalb wa Dimāgh properties

It is used as *Muqawwi-i Qalb wa Dimāgh* (heart and brain tonic) (Table 3) [39].

**Preparation:** *Ambar* is boiled in *Arq-i Gulab* (rose water) and rest of the ingredients is ground by mortar and pestle to make a fine powder. At last, powdered drug is mixed in boiled *amber* to form *Ghāliya* [39].

#### 3.5.1.2 Ghāliya for Su-i Mizāj Dimāgh wa Qalb Hār

*Amber Ashhab (Ambra grasea secretion) 7g* and *Mushk (Moschcus moschiferus secretion of a gland) 3½g* are powdered through mortar and pestle with *Arq-i Gulāb (Rosa damascena flower aqua)* and *Roghan-i Bān (Melia azadirachta oil)* [39].

**Table 3. Composition of Ghāliya with Muqawwi-i Qalb wa Dimāgh properties**

Ingredients	Quantity
<i>Mushk (Moschcus moschiferus secretion of a gland)</i>	2g
<i>Ambar Ash'hab (Ambra grasea secretion)</i>	4g
<i>Ūd (Aquilaria agallocha fungus)</i>	8g
<i>Sandal Surkh (Pterocarpus santalinus wood)</i>	10g
<i>Arq-i Gulāb (Rosa damascena flower distillate)</i>	Q.S.

### 3.5.2 Storage

*Ghāliya* is stored in air-tight glass bottles, vials and other glass vessels at neat, clean and dry places under hygienic conditions [17].

### 3.6 Safidāb

*Safidāb* is used for facial makeup in general. It is a kind of facial makeup containing white lead used for whitening the face. Despite early recognition of white lead toxicity and its debilitating effect on the nervous system, it is still being used by women in combination with vermilion [10].

In Iran, the earliest evidence of rouge comes from the large quantity of white powder in the old tomb found by archeologists. They found white powder stained at the bottom of the vessel used for storing the white powder, which seems to have been used as a foundation by both men and women [10].

### 3.7 Wasma

*Wasma* (*Indigofera tinctoria*) was primarily applied to emphasize and thicken the eyebrows and to join them in the middle and obtain the desired effect of *Abrū-i Pewasta*, or an

uninterrupted brow (Fig. 2) [10]. In Unani medicine, the leaves of *Wasma* are used as natural *Khidāb* (hair dye) generally advocated for *Shīb Sha'r* (hair greying) [40]. Sometimes, it was used to line the contour of the eyes to achieve a more emphatic look than the application of *Surma/Kuhl*. It was also used on beards for radiance and colour by some men. *Wasma* proper is obtained mainly from the indigo plant from India considered the best variety in Iran [10].

### 3.8 Khāl

*Khāl* is a beauty spot adorned either on the upper lip, the chin, cheeks or the middle of the brow. It was made by piercing a little lancet, leaving a lozenge-shaped mark of purplish hue, no larger than the nail of the little finger as compared to the tattooing (*Khālkābi*). If a woman was not favoured with it naturally, it had to be added by artifice, and this was most often done using a stick dipped into *Surma* [10].

It is also mentioned that one kind of *Ghāliya*, was also used for imprinting the *Khāl*, but the use of *Ghāliya* in a cosmetic context is unusual and can only be explained by the additives used such as fragrant oils, essences, etc. [10].



Fig. 2. Leaves of *Wasma* (*Indigo tinctoria*) (by Pancrat licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0)

#### 4. OTHER COSMETICS OF SOLAH SHRINGAR HAVING IMPORTANCE IN UNANI MEDICINE

##### 4.1 *Ubtan*

*Ubtan* also referred to as *Angrāg*, is a herbal cosmetic formulation, being used traditionally in India and other Asian countries. It is a semisolid preparation made up of powdered drugs used to remove the dirt particles from the skin and enhances the luster of the body. It is one of the vital components of Solah Shringar and has great importance in Unani medicine [8].

*Ubtan* is generally prepared by mixing *Haldi* (*Curcuma longa*) and *Chana* (*Cicer arietinum*) with other ingredients in rational quantity. Scientific evidences suggested that *Curcuma longa* present in *Ubtan* enhances the skin colour. It is used as cleanser, refresher and skin tonic in the local communities of India and neighbouring countries. It is also believed that it lightens the complexion of the skin and make the baby more beautiful [8].

##### 4.1.1 Preparation of *Ubtan*

The formulation is prepared by making the fine powder of pulverized drugs and by passing through sieve no 80. These all the powdered drugs are mixed thoroughly in a plastic or glass tray and ground uniformly to make homogenous mixture [8].

**Storage:** The formulation should be stored in glass or BPA-free plastic container and placed in a cool and dry place [8].

##### 4.1.2 Some Unani formulations of *Ubtan*

###### 4.1.2.1 *Ubtan* for face reddening

1. Make a fine powder of *Rāi Safaid* (*Brassica alba*) and *Hadtāl Surkh* (arsenic ore) in equal quantity. Then knead it into fresh milk and apply it on the face for 7 days [41].
2. *Majīth* (*Rubia cordifolia*), *Za'frān* (*Crocus sativa*), *Murr Makki* (*Commiphora myrrh gum*), and *Mastagi* (*Pistacia lentiscus gum*) in equal quantity are powdered in mortar. Further, knead it into *Āb-i Piyāz* (*Allium cepa juice*) and apply it on the face at night and wash it in the morning [41].

###### 4.1.2.2 *Ubtan* for skin cleansing and refreshing

Take rhizomes of *Haldi* (*Curcuma longa*), seeds of *Chana* (*Cicer arietinum*) and heartwood of *Sandal Safaid* (*Santalum album*) in equal quantity. Make a fine powder of all drugs and mix them to form a homogenous mixture. This formulation was scientifically evaluated by Biswas *et al.* and potent free radical scavenging activity, UV protection capacity and high tyrosinase inhibition activity were reported [8].

###### 4.1.2.3 *Ubtan* for fair skin complexion

*Chob Zard* (*Curcuma longa*) and *Sandal Surkh* (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) mashed in buffalo milk by mortar and pestle, can be used to achieve fair skin complexion [42].

##### 4.2 *Missī*

*Missī* is a powdered substances applied to the teeth in order to stain them black [36]. It is made up of vitriols and other items, i.e., metal sulphates [43]. It had a wide geographical reach across the Indian subcontinent but appears to have been centred in the North. Sometimes *Missī-Kājal* (*Kājal* 'lamp black applied to the eyes') is also used to beautify oneself. It would be stored in a special metal box called *Misī-dān*, sometimes it is made up of gold or silver. Besides staining the teeth, *Missī* could also be used to create a black *Rekhā* or *Dhāri* (line) between the teeth or on the lip. Contrary to these, the term *Missī karnā* was practised in the meaning of 'to deflower' (to take the virginity of) and the term *Missī lagāī* was used on the occasion of ceremony among prostitutes [43]. Some people relate the use of *Missī* with Islamic practice in the month of Muharram, but it is misleading and false in view of the eminent Islamic scholar Maulana Shah Ismail Shaheed [44].

Several poets from the middle of the nineteenth century, presented *Missī* in their writings e.g.:

*Sohbat meñ sārī rāt jagāī hai muflisī*  
*Wo to ye samjhe dil meñ ki Dhelā jo pāūñgī*  
*Damdī ke pān damdī ki missī mañgāūñgī*  
*Bāqī rahī chhadām so pāñī bharāūñgī*  
 [45]

*Lab-e-nāzuk ke bose lūñ to missī muñh banāī*  
*hai*

*Kaf-e-pā ko agar chūmūñ to mehñdī rañg laaī*  
*hai* [46]

#### 4.2.1 Composition of *Missī*

Across the Indian subcontinent *Missī* consistently had three classes of ingredients.

1. Source of metal ions: iron sulfate or iron shavings dissolved in lime juice as well as copper sulfate.
2. Dried plant materials: Tannins from the plants, such as *Halela (Terminalia chebula)*, *Balela (Terminalia bellirica)* *Āmla (Emblica officinalis)* etc.
3. Flavouring agents: such as *Qaranfal (Syzygium aromaticum)*, could be added to the mixture to ameliorate its objectionable taste [43].

#### 4.2.2 *Missī* as a medicinal compound

It was occasionally used for medicinal benefits i.e. strengthening treatment for women after childbirth [47,48], a treatment for toothache and as an astringent applied to the gums [48]. It might have the significant risk of chronic copper toxicity depending on the exact composition and frequency of application [43].

#### 4.3 *Kājal*

In Unani medicine, *Kājal* is defined as the collected smoke obtained from the burning of drugs. It is used both cosmetologically and therapeutically. Its possible English equivalent is soot [15]. *Kājal* has been in use for cosmetic purposes since ancient times, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent [49]. *Kājal* is believed to make eyes look even bigger and more beautiful. It is mostly used along with the upper and inner lower lids [49].

##### 4.3.1 Method of preparation

A sterilized metal plate is taken and balanced on top of the glass and an oil lamp is placed with a wick and castor oil fuel underneath; the lamp is lightened and almond or any other herbal drug is held in the flame. As the almond burns, soot will collect on the underside of the plate. Using a spoon or knife, *Kājal* is scraped off and stored in a small jar. A paste is then made by adding a few drops of almond oil, ghee or clarified butter [49].

##### 4.3.2 Possible risks and side effects of commercial *Kājal*

A report from the Food and Drug Administration points out that lead in form of lead sulphide

comprises over 50 percent of typical *Kājal* products [50]. Moreover, two cases of infant death due to *Kājal* has also been reported by Centre for Disease Control and Prevention [51].

In a nutshell, lead can lead to harmful effects on brain, bone marrow, kidney and other organs. Moreover, high level of lead in the blood can lead to coma, convulsions, and even death [52]. Since children have higher gut absorption and their nervous system is still developing, they're at greater risk of lead poisoning and low level of lead exposure whether from oral ingestion, inhalation, or trans-dermally, can lead to deleterious effect on brain, kidney and other organs [52].

## 5. CONCLUSION

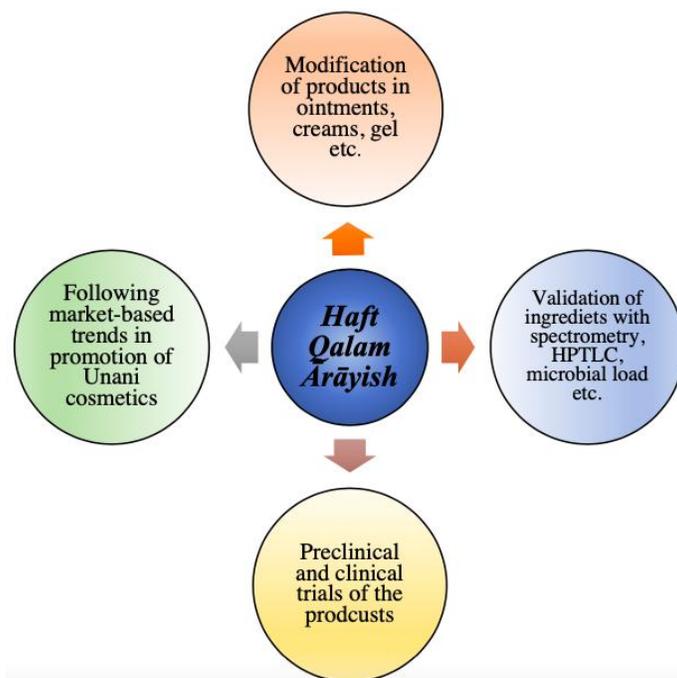
Going through the contributions made by Unani scholars, especially in the medieval period, it gives us an impetus to focus on this neglected aspect of body care. The herbal cosmetics have got greater acceptance among the masses. Unani cosmeceutical products are few to count on the finger. Thus, it is the need of hour to explore the cosmetics in the light of Unani medicine and evaluate them on scientific parameters for cosmetic and therapeutic purposes.

The current status of Unani cosmetics is very dismal marred by negligence and least R & D. Among the products falling under *Solah Shringar*, very few products are being manufactured and marketed such as, *Ghaza Husn Afza*, *Kalonji* facial cream etc. Primary reasons for this deteriorating condition are as under:

1. Least investment
2. Negligence by Unani pharmaceutical companies
3. No inherent government policy to boost Unani cosmetics

Contrary to this, other traditional Indian medicines like Ayurveda has made tremendous progress in this regard and had Global Market value of US\$ 4.5 Bn in 2017 and is expected to reach US\$ 14.9 Bn by 2026 at a CAGR of 16.14% [53]; whereas market value of Unani cosmetics is merely negligible.

There is need to boost this industry as products under *Solah Shringar*, especially *Haft Qalam Ārāyish* have the traditional as well as



**Fig. 3. Measures that can be taken to boost the market value of Unani cosmetics**

ceremonial importance in Indian societies. Some important measures that can be undertaken in this aspect are depicted in the following diagram (Fig. 3).

Apart from this, Unani cosmetics may be promoted under mega projects like Skill India, Start-up India, Make in India and Reliant India which also underscores the government encouragement for this industry.

#### CONSENT

It is not applicable.

#### ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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