

**The Effects of Turmeric as a Natural Agent of Beauty & Medicine in Cultural
Beauty History.**

Shana Cromwell- Ramnarain
Business & Technology of Fashion
New York City College of Technology
Dr. Denise Sutton
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Many spices and herbs have been known throughout the centuries to be used for beauty practices. For example, dating all the way back into the Egyptian civilization, nearly 4000 BCE (Scholtz, 2023), dark minerals were used as makeup, or eyeliner for these women day to day. Medicinal herbs were also used for beauty practices and healing physical ailments often as modern-day technology did not allow the luxuries of convenience that we now have. Natural herbs and spices being used for beauty practices have been common throughout the centuries within any and every culture. Specific to Indian culture, *turmeric* is a very important spice in Indian daily life. Not only used as a common spice for cooking dishes such as curries, pastes and rice and meat dishes, but turmeric is also used in their beauty practices. Turmeric has many qualities that Indian women have utilized daily and spread throughout the world through their success in natural beauty practices.

Turmeric is a spice largely known to originate from the country of India. This staple beauty ingredient is a spice grown extensively throughout the Indian subcontinent (Krup, 2013). Turmeric is largely known for its medicinal attributes; treating coughs, diabetes and hepatic disorders, turmeric has been sourced over the last few decades in extensive pharmacological effort in order to utilize the benefits this natural spice can bring us. Turmeric has many antimicrobial and antibacterial traits while acting as a natural antioxidant as well (Tilak, 2004). Because of these antimicrobial and antioxidant properties, turmeric is used as the common skin care ingredient which has been more common in the West over the past couple of years especially as natural skin care has taken precedence. Used in face masks, creams and serums, turmeric is used to brighten the skin and has become popularized in American culture with the rise of holistic care.

Although turmeric is widely known to be used in many beauty products in modern days, the traditional origins of turmeric and its uses date in traditional Indian wedding ceremonies. In Indian bridal practices, turmeric is also mixed into what is known as *dye* paste for a *Haldi* ceremony. On the eve of her wedding, the Indian bride will have her hands, feet and face covered in turmeric paste in order to give the bride a beautiful wedding glow (Rajanala, 2018). This has been a part of Indian wedding culture for decades, and is seen commonly in international beauty practices, but very integral to Indian bridal practice as it brings a beautiful glowing appearance on the bride's most important day. Turmeric is one of the most important spices in Indian traditional celebrations, although there are others as well; Sindoor, commonly known in America as Vermilion, is another type of powder used in bridal practices, these powders are integral to the cultural importance of Indian heritage (Dasgupta 2017). Although turmeric is widely seen as a skin care and beauty practice in America, its importance lies deep in the culture of Indian wedding ceremonies, which bring *extreme* significance to one's social status and caste status in the country of India. We in America can enjoy the holistic benefits that an herb like turmeric can bring to our skin care marketing practices, but the beauty in the popularization of turmeric lies in the rich history of Indian bridal industry, one of the largest industries in the entirety of the country.

Turmeric has also been used not only in India, but also in traditional Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine. Turmeric is used in idyllic medicine as a warning herb, it's used in Ayurvedic culture as a way to balance one's energy as well as treating the body for a variety of ailments such as digestive issues joint pains and any skin problems one may have. In this culture, it is used more of a spiritual medium, said to purify blood as well as remedy other physical ailments (Prasad 2011). Although this was used as more of a spiritual practice in Ayurvedic culture,

Chinese medicine was also very popular in its use in turmeric as well. The Chinese used turmeric in order to improve circulation, with its anti-inflammatory properties as well as treating conditions such as arthritis and menstrual cramps for young women. Within Chinese medicine, turmeric is popular for its antioxidant properties, as well as treatment for early cancer prognosis. It's also said to help indigestion, fungal infections, heart disease and bacterial as well as viral infections (Verma 2018). Although in Indian culture turmeric was used mostly for traditional beauty related reasons in their important traditional customs, the Chinese and Ayurvedic utilized turmeric in more of a spiritual and medical way in order to heal the body.

Turmeric has many uses in modern day, even being used for textiles as a natural dye, turmeric is a very strong dye that has medicinal properties as well as cultural value in many Asian countries. Turmeric is known in America mostly for its skin care properties and its support in marketing American beauty products. Although it's been very popularized especially in the recent decades in western culture, turmeric has very historic origins in Asian cultures, on the eastern side of the world. Being knowledgeable about the other cultural uses for an importance by such as turmeric gives one a very *broad* perspective on the uses of turmeric. Not only for beauty practices, but for medicinal, spiritual and traditional practices. I believe natural herbs like turmeric can bridge the gap between beauty and care that has formed in the world today. Beauty was always a natural entity, enhanced with natural products given to us by Mother Nature. Over time, beauty practices have been reformed and remade into a more technologically advanced, overprocessed field. Turmeric being used as a beauty ingredient in American products brings back the holistic perspective of *natural beauty*. Turmeric is one of the most important spices used in beauty that I perceive as a natural antidote to the world of beauty that has been itemized,

and lost touch with natural beauty in general. Turmeric can change the way Americans view beauty, and call for better production in our domestic products.

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