



**THE IMPORTANCE
OF THE
MISWAAK
IN ISLAM**

**By:
Mujlisul Ulama of South Africa
PO Box 3393
Port Elizabeth, 6056
South Africa**

THE MISWAAK

WHAT IS A MISWAAK? - Miswaaks are twigs of certain trees that were used, and should be used, on a regular basis by Muslims. Miswaaks were used for centuries by Muslims (and all Prophets—Peace upon Them) to maintain oral hygiene and gain the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala. It is a “natural toothbrush”, not only does it provide spiritual benefits, but it is also beneficial to the everyday maintenance of one's mouth, gums, teeth, and general well-being.

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) laid great stress on the use of the Miswaak. The Miswaak was in use for brushing and cleansing the teeth long before the advent of our Holy Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). In fact the records of our Nabi Muhammad's (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) Ahadith indicate that the Miswaak was the practice of all the Ambiyaa (Prophets of Allah) — Peace be upon them.

Hadhrat Abu Ayyub (Rahmatullah alayh) narrates that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said: “Four things are amongst the practices of the Ambiyaa —Circumcision, Application of perfume, Miswaak and Marriage”. (*AHMAD AND TIRMIZI*)

In fact, the importance of the Miswaak is such that at one stage our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was under the impression that Allah Ta'ala might decree the use of the Miswaak Fardh (compulsory) upon the Ummah (Islamic Nation).

We learn from this Hadith that the Prophet (Sallallahu alayhi wasallam) liked to clean his teeth with Miswaak with every Salaat, but he did not make it obligatory for the reason that it would be inconvenient for his followers. It shows that he was extremely affectionate and kind to his Ummah.

This Hadith also shows that using Miswaak is an admirable act. Every Muslim should make it a routine to use it as frequently as possible especially before performing prayers.

Allamah Sha'rani (Rahmatuallah alayhi) states in *Kashful Ghummah* that the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said: "Whoever spurns or rejects the Miswaak is not of us (Muslims)."

Hadhrat Ibn Mubarak (Rahmatullah alayh) said: "If the inhabitants of a city spurn and reject the use of the Miswaak, the Ruler should wage battle against them like he would wage war against the renegades or *murtad-deen*". (*KHAANIYAH*)

All the foregoing Ahadith of our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) and the statements of the learned jurists of Islam point clearly to the tremendous importance of the Miswaak in Islam. However, despite its elevated status, significance and importance, this noble practice is neglected and generally discarded by present day Muslims. Needless to say, this is one of the examples of the spiritual and worldly decadence that have set into the Muslim Nation.

The revival of the practice of using the Miswaak instead of the various substitutes is of utmost importance to Muslims. In times such as the present age when we are confronted and surrounded by the satanic forces of irreligiosity, materialism, atheism, vice and immorality, it is of greater importance that Muslims strive most ardently to re-instate the practices or the Sunnah of our beloved Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). And, of these is the Miswaak.

To revive a "lost" or a forgotten Sunnah of our Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) carries a great and mighty Thawaab (Reward). In this regard our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said: "He who

holds on firmly to my Sunnah at a time when my Ummah are (grovelling) in corruption will receive a reward of a hundred martyrs”.

ADVANTAGES AND BENEFITS OF THE MISWAAK

(1) Eliminates bad odour and improves the sense of taste.

The wisdom underlying the use of the Miswaak after rising from sleep is that during sleep bad vapours rise from the stomach towards the mouth. This causes bad odour in the mouth as well as a change in the sense of taste. Use of the Miswaak eliminates the bad odour and rectifies the change which occurred in the taste. (*NALE WA TA'LEEQ*)

(2) Sharpens the Memory. Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahu anhu) said that: “Miswaak sharpens the memory”.

(3) Sharpens the Intelligence.

Four things increase the Intelligence—

(i) Shunning of nonsensical talks

(ii) Use of the Miswaak

(iii) Sitting in the company of the pious, and

(iv) Sitting in the company of the Ulama.

(*TIBBE NABAWI*)

(4) Eliminates Slime. Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahu anhu) said that: “Miswaak removes slime”. (*IHYA-UL-ULOOM*)

(5) A Cure for Illness. Hadhrat Aisha (Radhiyallahu anha) said that: “Miswaak (its constant use) is a cure for all illness excepting Death”.

(*REPORTED BY DAILAMI IN FIRDAUS*)

- (6) Miswaak creates fragrance in the mouth.**
- (7) Miswaak strengthens the gums.**
- (8) Miswaak prevents tooth decay.**
- (9) Miswaak prevents further increase of decay which has already set in the teeth.**
- (10) Miswaak is a cure for headaches.**
- (11) Miswaak assists in eliminating toothaches.**
- (12) Miswaak creates lustre (Noor) on the face of the one who continually uses it.**
- (13) Miswaak causes the teeth to glow.**
- (14) Miswaak removes the yellowishness of the teeth.**
- (15) Miswaak strengthens the eye-sight.**
- (16) Miswaak is beneficial for the health of the entire body.**
- (17) Miswaak assists in the process of Digestion.**
- (18) Miswaak is a cure for a certain mouth disease known as Qilaa'. This is stated in Hujjatul Baaleghah.**
- (19) Miswaak clears the voice. This is stated in TibbeNabawi.**
- (20) Miswaak facilitates the appetite (Tibbe Nabawi).**
- (21) Miswaak increases the eloquence of one's speech.**
Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anhu) said that “Miswaak increases the eloquence of a person.”. (AL-JAAMI)

(22) Miswaak (i.e. its constant use) will be a factor to ease the pangs of Death. The continuous use of the Miswaak makes it easy for the Rooh (Soul) to depart from the body when its appointed time arrives. (SHARHUS SUDOOR)

(23) Through the constant use of Miswaak, Insha-Allah the Kalimah will be easy to recite at the time of death.

(24) Miswaak increases the Thawaab (reward) of Salaat (prayer) from seventy times to four hundred times. (HADITH)

(25) Miswaak is a factor which will earn higher ranks in Jannat for the one who uses it.

(26) The Angels sing the praises of the one who uses the Miswaak.

(27) Use of the Miswaak displeases Shaitaan.

(28) Use of the Miswaak graces one with the companionship of the Angels.

(29) And, the greatest benefit of using the Miswaak is the attainment of Allah Ta'ala's Pleasure.

Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahu anhu), the fourth Khalif of Islam said: "Make the Miswaak (i.e. its use) incumbent upon you, and be constant in this practice because Allah's Pleasure is in it and it increases the Reward of Salaat from ninety-nine times to four hundred times".

TIME WHEN USAGE OF THE MISWAAK IS SUNNAT

1. For the recitation of the Qur'aan.
2. For the recitation of Hadith.
3. When the mouth emits an odour.
4. For the learning or teaching of virtues of Islam.
5. For making Thikrullah (Remembrance of Allah, meditation).
6. After entering ones home.
7. Before entering any good gathering.
8. When experiencing pangs of hunger and thirst.

9. After the signs of death are evident.
10. At the time of Sehri.
11. Before meals.
12. Before undertaking a journey.
13. On returning from a journey.
14. Before sleeping.
15. Upon awakening.

One of the Sunnats of Wudhu is to use a Miswaak. Wherever a Miswaak is available and is not used, the full beauty and complete Sawaab of the Wudhu is not realised.

Those who neglect the use of the Miswaak invite upon themselves a great misfortune by being deprived of the tremendous amount of Sawaab (Reward) which this noble practice carries.

HOW LONG SHOULD A MISWAAK BE?

A Miswaak should not be longer than a “span” i.e. the maximum distance between the tips of the thumb and little finger, and it should not be thicker than a finger’s breadth.

HOW SHOULD A MISWAAK BE USED?

A Miswaak should be held in such a manner that the small finger and thumb is below the miswaak and the remaining fingers on its upper side.

Brushing technique:

The techniques employed for removing plaque mechanically are similar to that for the toothbrush and the chewing stick; i.e., vertical and horizontal brushing. The cleaning movement should always be directed away from the gingival margin of the teeth (away from the gums) on both the buccal (outer cheek) and lingual (inner cheek) surfaces.

Care should be taken to avoid damaging the soft tissues of the

mouth. Satisfactory cleaning can be achieved if this procedure is followed for five minutes.

There are two basic holds: Pen-grip (three-finger) or palm-grip (five finger-grip). In each case the aim is to ensure firm but controlled movement of the brush end of the Miswaak within the oral cavity, so that every area of the mouth is reached with relative ease and convenience.

Freshness:

Miswaak should be freshly cut so that it is supple, easily chewed, and still rich in active constituents. The root should be whitish-brown in color; a dark brown color indicates that the Miswaak is no longer fresh.

If a stick is dry, the end for chewing should initially be soaked in fresh water for 24 hours. It should be noted that soaking for unduly long periods causes loss of active constituents and diminishes the therapeutic properties, although the mechanical effects on the teeth can still occur.

The end: Before Miswaak is used, the end should be washed with water. It is then chewed repeatedly until the fibers stand out like the bristles of a toothbrush. These fibers should be trimmed every 24 hours.

When to use Miswaak:

In general, the Miswaak should be used a minimum of five times a day (i.e. before each prayer). However it is recommended to use it all the time, whenever possible.

Common mistakes in Miswaak use:

1. The end is either too thin or too thick.
2. Keeping it in the mouth while doing other things.

3. Not cutting the end every day.
4. Forgetting that teeth have five faces (inner, outer, two sides, and biting/chewing face), and only using Miswaak to clean the outer faces.

AADAAB (Etiquette) OF THE MISWAAK

- (1) The Miswaak should be a straight twig, devoid of roughness.
- (2) The Miswaak should be clean.
- (3) The Miswaak should not be too hard nor too soft.
- (4) The Miswaak should not be used while one is lying down.
- (5) The new Miswaak should be approximately 8 inches (a hand-span) in length.
- (6) The Miswaak should be the thickness of the forefinger.
- (7) Before using the Miswaak, it should be washed.
- (8) After use it should be washed as well.
- (9) The Miswaak should not be sucked.
- (10) The Miswaak should be placed vertically when not in use. It should not be thrown onto the ground.
- (11) If the Miswaak is dry it should be moistened with water prior to use. This is Mustahab. It is preferable to moisten it with Rose water.
- (12) The Miswaak should not be used in the toilet.
- (13) The Miswaak should be used at least thrice (brush three times) for each section of the mouth, e.g. brush the upper layer of teeth thrice, then the lower layer thrice, etc.
- (14) The Miswaak should not be used at both ends.
- (15) The Miswaak should not be taken from an unknown tree as it may be poisonous.

AHADITH RELATING TO USAGE OF THE MISWAAK

Hadhrat Ibn Umar (Radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said: “Make a regular practice of the Miswaak, for verily, it is healthy for the mouth and it is a Pleasure for the Creator (i.e. Allah is pleased with the Muslim who uses the Miswaak).” (*BUKHARI*)

Hadhrat Abu Umamah (Radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said: “Use the Miswaak, for verily, it purifies the mouth, and it is a Pleasure for the Lord. Jib-ra-eel (Alayhis salaam) exhorted me so much to use the Miswaak that I feared that its use would be decreed obligatory upon me and upon my Ummah. If I did not fear imposing hardship on my Ummah I would have made its use obligatory upon my people. Verily, I use the Miswaak so much that I fear the front part of my mouth being peeled (by constant and abundant brushing with the Miswaak).” (*IBN MAJAH*)

Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said: “I was commanded so much to use the Miswaak that I thought Wahi of the Qur’aan (Revelation) would be revealed, regarding it (i.e. its use).” (*ABU YA’LAA*)

Although the use of the Miswaak was not made Fardh (compulsory) upon the Ummah, nevertheless its use was Fardh upon our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). This is borne out by the following Hadith: Hadhrat Aisha (Radhiyallahu anha) narrates that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said: “These (practices), viz., Miswaak, Witr Salaat and Tahajjud Salaat, are Sunnat for you and Fardh for me”.

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) would use the Miswaak (regularly) prior to sleeping and after rising from sleep.

(*MUNTAKHAB*)

Allamah Sha'rani (Rahmatullah alayay) states in the Kitaab, *Kashful Ghummah*, that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) advised: "Whenever you retire for sleep, use the Miswaak".

Hadhrat Ibn Umar (Radhiyallahu anhu) says that many a time Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) used the Miswaak as much as four times in a single night.

Hadhrat Aishah (Radhiyallahu anha) narrates: "Verily, the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) would use the Miswaak before making Wudhu (ablutions), whenever he arose from sleep, whether it be during the night or during the day". (*ABU DAWOOD*)

Similar Ahadith have been narrated by Imam Ahmad and Abu Yatraa (Rahmatullah alayh). Imam Ghazali (Rahmatullah alayh) has mentioned in his *Ihya-ul-Uloom* that a person before sleeping at night should keep his water and Miswaak ready and close at hand. As soon as he wakes from sleep during the night he should immediately use the water and the Miswaak, and engage in the remembrance of Allah.

Hadhrat Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anhu) states: "The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) would use the Miswaak at night time (i.e. Tahajjud time) after every two Rakaats Salaat he (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) performed". (*IBN MAJAH*)

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MISWAAK IN ISLAM

It is clear from this Hadith that two types of benefits accrue from the use of the Miswaak. These could be categorised as follows:

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- (1) Benefits which relate to the Hereafter.
 - (2) Benefits which relate to this worldly life.

The 1st category comprises the various Sawaabs (Rewards) which the Servant of Allah will obtain in the Hereafter for using the Miswaak. The 2nd category comprises the immediate benefits or advantages accruing to the physical human body by the constant use of the Miswaak.

The prime motive of the true Believer in his use of the Miswaak is his desire to obtain the first category of Benefits, the obtainal of the second category benefits being a necessary corollary. This is so, since the only factor which governs the motive and intention of the Believer in his Ibaadat (Worship) is the Pleasure of Allah, our Creator, Nourisher and Sustainer.

MERITORIOUS MOMENTS FOR USAGE OF THE MISWAAK

MISWAAK UPON ENTERING HOME: Shuraih (Radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that he asked Aisha (Radhiyallahu anha): “What was the first thing Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) did upon entering the house?” Aisha (Radhiyallahu anha) replied: “Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) would use the Miswaak”. (*MUSLIM*)

MISWAAK UPON LEAVING HOME: “Whenever Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) left the house he would use the Miswaak.” (*KASHFUL GHUMMAH*)

MISWAAK BEFORE AND AFTER MEALS: “Abu Hurairah (Radhiyallahu anhu) said: “I have used the Miswaak before sleeping, after rising, before eating and after eating, ever since I heard the Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) advising so”. (*AHMAD*)

MISWAAK BEFORE RECITING THE HOLY QUR'AAN:

Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahu anhu) said: “Verily, your mouths are the pathways of the Qur’aan (i.e. you recite with your mouth), therefore cleanse your mouth with the Miswaak thoroughly”. (*IBN MAJAH*)

MISWAAK ON FRIDAYS: “Ibn Sabaq (Radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said on one Friday: “O gathering of Muslims, Allah has made this Day (Friday) a Day of Eid for Muslims, therefore, bathe (on this day), use perfume and regard the use of the Miswaak (on this day) as an obligation upon you”.

(*MUATTA IMAM MUHAMMAD*)

Suhail Bin Hanief states that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said that to bathe and use the Miswaak on Fridays are of the Hugooq (Rights or Duties) of Friday.

MISWAAK DURING FASTING: Aamir Bin Rabiya (Radhiyallahu anhu) narrates: “I have seen Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) using the Miswaak many a time while fasting”.

In another Hadith our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said that one of the best characteristics of a fasting person is his use of the Miswaak.

The majority of the Ulama have opined that it is Sunnat to use the Miswaak while fasting. It is recorded in Fataawa Sirajiah that a fasting person may use a dry or a moist (i.e. fresh, green) Miswaak.

THE SAHABAS (COMPANIONS) AND THE MISWAAK

The Sahabas (Radhiyallahu anhum) who were the best and the noblest examples and teachers of the Sunnah of our Nabi (Sallallahu

Alayhi Wasallam) viewed the Miswaak in a very serious light and regarded it as a practice of supreme holiness. Their constant use of the Miswaak, their continuous exhortations to use the Miswaak and their warnings to those who neglect the Miswaak are ample evidence of the nobility and the importance attached to this practice of using the Miswaak.

Ibn Abbas, Ali and Ataa (Radhiyallahu anhum) said: “Regard the Miswaak as an obligation on you, and do not be neglectful of it. Be constant in using it, for verily, in it lies the Pleasure of Allah, The Merciful, and in it is greater reward for Salaat”.

Hassaan Bin Atiyyah (Radhiyallahu anhu) said: “Miswaak is half of Imaan, and Wudhu is half of Imaan”. (*SHARHU IHYA-UL-ULOOM*)

Abdul Aziz Abu Dawood (Radhiyallahu anhu) said: “Two things of a Muslim are among the best of practices—(1) Performing Tahajjud Salaat, and (2) Constancy in the use of the Miswaak”.

THE ULAMA AND MISWAAK

Hadhrat Shaukani (Rahmatullah alayh) said: “Miswaak is one of the Laws of Shariah. And, this fact is as clear as daylight. This has been conceded by the people of the world”. (*NAILIL AUTAAR*)

Hadhrat Sha’rani (Rahmatullah alayh) said: “A pledge has been taken from us on behalf of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) that we be steadfast in the use of the Miswaak at the time of making Wudhu. Should any of us be forgetful then he should tie the Miswaak with a string and hang it around his neck or keep it in his turban (so that it will be at hand when making Wudhu).

The general public has broken this pledge. It (constancy in the use

of the Miswaak) is indicative of the strength of one's Imaan and the degree of respect one has for the Laws of Allah and His Rasool (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). The Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) emphasized the use of the Miswaak. And, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) was not satisfied merely with issuing an order once, but repeatedly exhorted his followers (regarding its use).

Allamah Aini (Rahmatullah alayh) says: "Abu Amr (Radhiyallahu anhu) said that upon the significance of the Miswaak concensus of opinion exists. There is no difference of opinion on this score. According to all learned men of Islam, Salaat performed after using the Miswaak is far nobler than a Salaat without Miswaak.

Shaikh Muhammad (Rahmatullah alayh) said: "Verily, over a hundred Hadith have been narrated regarding the significance of the Miswaak. Therefore, it is a great astonishment to behold that so many among mankind as well as among the learned neglect such an important practice which has been emphasized to such an extent.

AADAAB OR RESPECTS TO BE OBSERVED REGARDING THE MISWAAK

The majority of the Ulama hold the view that the use of the Miswaak is not Fardh (compulsory). However, despite it not being decreed Fardh by the Shariah, it is of utmost importance. It is likewise essential that all the Aadaab pertaining to the Miswaak be observed. Neglect of the Aadaab is a sign of spiritual indolence and weakness of Imaan. In order to achieve the Sawaab of a particular practice in full measure it is necessary that the Aadaab relating to the practice be observed. If neglect is shown towards the Aadaab, the final result will be the neglect of that very practice. In the Kitaab, Ta'leemul Muta'allim the following is stated: "He who becomes neglectful about the Aadaab is deprived of the Sunnats;

and he who becomes neglectful of the Sunnats is deprived of the Faraa-idh (compulsory acts); and he who becomes neglectful of the Faraaidh is deprived of the Hereafter”.

Faqih Abu Laith Samarqandi (Rahmatullah alayh) states: “As long as the Servant of Allah safeguards the Aadaab shaytaan does not attempt to assault him (i.e. mislead him). However, when he neglects the Aadaab shaytaan makes advances into the Sunnats (i.e. misleads the Servant from the Sunnats). Thereafter follows shaytaan’s assault on the Faraa-idh (compulsory duties). This is followed by shaytaan's assault on Ikhlās (sincerity), and finally on Yaqeen (Faith). Hence, it is necessary for a person to protect the Aadaab of all his affairs and actions, eg. the Aadaab of selling and the Aadaab of Wudhu, Salaat, buying, etc. (*BUSTAANUL AARIFEEN*)

TYPES OF MISWAAKS

It is permissible to take for a Miswaak all types of tree twigs provided these are not harmful or poisonous. It is forbidden to use a Miswaak from a poisonous tree. Miswaaks from the following trees are **not** permissible:

- (1) Pomegranate
- (2) Bamboo
- (3) Raihaan
- (4) Chambelie

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) **FORBADE THE USE OF Raihaan** as Miswaak because it causes the sickness, Juz-zaam

The following are the types of Miswaak are recommended:

- (1) Peelo tree
- (2) Zaitoon or Olive tree
- (3) Bitam or
- (4) Any bitter tree

(5) Walnut tree

Miswaak of the Peelo Tree: “And, the best of Miswaaks is the Peelo, then the Olive.” (*KABIRI*)

The best type of Miswaak is that which is taken from the Peelo tree. In the Kitaab, Ta-heelul Manaa-fi’ it is mentioned that the miswaak of the Peelo tree is excellent for obtaining the glow or glitter of the teeth.

Our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) also praised and recommended the Peelo tree for Miswaak purposes. Besides recommending the Peelo tree, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) as well as the Sahaabas (Radhiyallahu anhum) used Miswaaks of this tree.

Ibn Sa’d (Radhiyallahu anhu) narrates that Abu Khabrah (Radhiyallahu anhu) said: “Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) presented me with a Miswaak of the Peelo tree, and he (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said: “Use the Miswaak of the Peelo tree”.

Ibn Masood (Radhiyallahu anhu) said: “I always kept a stock of Peelo Miswaaks for Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam)”.

In the Kitaab, Mawaahib, it is stated that the Companions of Imam Shafi (Rahmatullah alayh) have recorded Concensus of Opinion among them on the fact that the use of the Peelo Miswaak is Mustahab (i.e. an Islamic practice which carries much Sawaab (Reward) if upheld, and in the event of not fulfilling it no punishment will be meted out).

Miswaak of the Olive Tree: Rasullulah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) has spoken highly of the Miswaak of this tree as well. The following Hadith brings out the significance of the Olive tree Miswaak: “Use the Miswaak of the Olive tree. It is the Miswaak of

a Mubarak (auspicious or gracious) tree. It purifies and makes wholesome the mouth. It removes the yellowishness of the teeth. It is my (i.e. Rasulullah's—Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) Miswaak and the Miswaak of the Ambiyaa (Prophets) who came before me". (*MUNTAKHAB*)

Miswaak of the Bitam Tree: In another Hadith it is stated that in the absence of the Peelo tree the Olive tree should be used, and in the absence of the Olive Miswaak, the Bitam tree Miswaak should be used. (*MUNTAKHAB*)

Miswaak of some bitter tree: If none of the three abovementioned types of Miswaak is available, a Miswaak of any bitter tree should be used. Miswaak of a bitter tree removes odour of the mouth to a greater extent.

In Alamgiri it is stated that the Miswaak of a bitter tree makes the mouth wholesome, strengthens the teeth and the gums.

Miswaak of the Walnut Tree: Miswaak of the Walnut tree has been recommended as well.

SUBSTITUTES FOR THE MISWAAK

The Fingers

In the case of the non-availability of the Miswaak the fingers should be used to cleanse the teeth. This method will serve the purpose of the Miswaak as far as the Sawaab is concerned, i.e. if a Miswaak is not available the Sawaab (Reward) attendant to the Miswaak will be realized by using the fingers as a substitute provided that Niyyat (intention) of Miswaak be made when the fingers are used for this purpose. Rub the teeth with the forefinger and the thumb.

Hadhrat Amr Bin Auf Muzni (Rahmatullah alayh) states that the

fingers could be used as an adequate substitute for the Miswaak in the case of the latter's absence.

Imam Tahtaawi (Rahmatullah alayh) says: "The promised Reward (of using the Miswaak) shall be obtained in the event of the non-availability of the Miswaak, and not in the event of its availability". In other words, if a Miswaak is available and you are able to use same then the Sawaab of it will not be realised by using a substitute.

Cloth

A coarse piece of cloth may also be used in case of the non-availability of a Miswaak. Those who have no teeth should use the fingers or a cloth as substitutes for the Miswaak, and they will obtain the Sawaab. But Niyyat of the Miswaak should be made. And, the significance of the Miswaak shall be obtained even though the finger or a cloth be used in the event of the non-availability of the Miswaak (*SHURAMBALI*)

Toothbrush

If the toothbrush is made of bristles (pig's hair) then its use is *not* permissible. If bristles are not used, the use of the toothbrush is permissible. However, the toothbrush will not serve as a substitute in the case of the Miswaak being available. If a Miswaak is available Reward will not be realised by using the toothbrush. The same applies to toothpowder or any other means of cleansing the teeth. It should be remembered here that during the time of our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) substitutes, e.g. toothpowder, etc., existed, but our Nabi (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) never equated these with the Miswaak. Therefore, the argument of the modernist that the toothbrush today takes the place of the Miswaak is fallacious.

WONDERFUL FACTS ON THE MISWAAK

The Miswaak is a natural tool for brushing the teeth. It is taken from the roots and branches of particular desert trees. It differs from one region to another, but in Arabia and Asia it is taken from the Arak tree. This is the most famous variety, and is the kind that was used by the Prophet (Sallallahu alayhi wasallam)

The Miswaak is also obtained from other trees. In Africa, for example, it is cut from Lime and Orange trees, and in America some are cut from the Senna tree.

As the Arak tree is so well-known, and as it was the kind that the Prophet (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) used, it has been scientifically studied. The following summarize the various discoveries regarding Miswaak.

Health effects of Miswaak:

Physically, the Miswaak is a natural toothbrush. It is composed of a compact group of minute natural fibers that perform exactly the same function as a normal toothbrush except that it is made of natural rather than plastic fibers. For this reason it may be more gentle on the gums.

Miswaak's natural toothpaste is made up of many substances that are important for cleaning teeth. Many researchers have studied the Miswaak in depth, and have proven that Miswaak contains over ten different natural chemical compounds considered essential for good oral and dental hygiene.

They are: fluoride, silica, tannic acid, resins, alkaloids (salvadorine), volatile oils (sinigrin), sulfur vitamin C, sodium bicarbonate, chlorides, calcium, benzylisothiocyanate (BIT), and others including salicylic acids, sterols, trimethylamine, saponins, flavenoids.

Some of these components are stain removers and teeth whiteners, some protect teeth against caries, some are bactericidal and antiseptic, some help in healing and to repair tissues, some promote remineralization (building) of tooth enamel, and some give the pleasant taste and smell.

Cytotoxicity:

Results of cytotoxic tests showed no cytotoxic (cell damaging) effects from using freshly cut Miswaak. However, the same plant used 24 hours after cutting did contain harmful components. Based on these findings, researchers recommend cutting the used portion of the Miswaak after it has been used for a day and preparing a fresh part.

Scientific comparison between Miswaak and toothbrushes:

A clinical trial study on Ethiopian schoolchildren, comparing Miswaak with the conventional toothbrush, found Miswaak to be as effective as the toothbrush in removing oral deposits. The study also found instruction and supervision to be important since the children in the sample were not familiar with techniques for using Miswaak.

(source: <http://miswak.org/>)

Potential Dental Benefits With Regular Use:

Research shows that the bark of the “Toothbrush Tree” contains an antibiotic which suppresses the growth of bacteria and the formation of plaque in the mouth. Research also suggests that the regular use of Miswaak significantly reduces plaque, gingivitis, and the growth of cariogenic bacteria. No toothpaste required! Miswaak, naturally contains many components such as fluoride, astringents, detergents, resins (a possible enamel protectant) and abrasives.

(source: <http://miswak.org/>)

Scientifically as well, it has been proven that Miswaak is very good for gums maintenance and it kills bad odour, overall, it improves your taste buds and makes your teeth whiter. Research also indicates that Miswak suppresses decay-causing bacteria, gingivitis and plaque formation among many other benefits.

1. Natural way of brushing teeth.
2. It is an organic product.
3. Keep you safe against all teeth diseases.
4. Kills bad odour.
5. Requires no toothpaste.
6. Easy to carry around.

It has no harmful side-effects. (source: <http://alkhaircq.com>)

A Miswaak or is probably an alien thing to the western world. But, it's a twig which a majority of people from Muslim countries use daily to brush their teeth. Although it might sound outdated to use twigs from trees for cleaning your teeth, studies conducted on the Miswaak prove otherwise. Studies have inferred that Miswaak is better than toothpaste for preventing gum disease. It is being known as chewing stick in the western world and is being looked upon as a form of alternative medicine. So, let's analyze this "wonder twig" keeping documented scientific studies as proofs.

The use of Miswaak is well spread in the Muslim population of the world, and is a common entity in Muslim countries. The reason for common use of Miswaak by Muslims can be attributed to religious beliefs. The last messenger of Islam used it frequently and also instructed his followers to do the same and hence the practice continues widely in Muslim countries. There are 70 benefits of Miswaak as suggested by Islamic Literature and many of these have been scientifically proven.

You might be wondering what exactly a Miswaak is in the first place. The Miswaak is obtained from the twigs of the Arak tree

(Peelu tree) although a few other trees can also be used to obtain it such as walnut and olive.

A few important benefits of Miswaak

- ? Kills Gum disease causing bacteria.
- ? Fights plaque effectively.
- ? Fights against caries.
- ? Removes Bad breath and odour from mouth.
- ? Creates a fragrance in the mouth.
- ? Effectively clean between teeth due to its parallel bristles.
- ? Increases salivation and hence inhibits dry mouth (Xerostomia)

Scientific Studies on the Miswaak:

Although the 70 benefits of Miswaak range widely, the main one we are examining is its effect on oral health. So, let's throw some light on scientific studies conducted on Miswaak.

The Wrigley Company made a study on Miswaak which was published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry. The study found that mints laced with Miswaak extract were 20 times more effective in killing bacteria than ordinary mints. A small testimony to this fact is that after half an hour, the mints laced with Miswak extract killed about 60% of the bacteria where as the ordinary mints managed only 3.6%

In the August issue of Journal of Periodontology (2008) appeared a study conducted by Swedish researchers on Miswaak. The study apparently found that suspended Miswaak pieces in a petridish (medium for culturing bacteria) were able to kill bacteria that cause periodontal disease with out being in physical contact with the bacteria. The researchers suggested that Miswak might be giving antibiotics as gases trying to explain this phenomenon.

A study which compares toothbrushing and using Miswaak (Miswak ing!) can be seen on <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15643758> . The study concluded that Miswaak was more effective than toothbrushing in reducing plaque and gingivitis provided it was used correctly. Similar studies found on the same website and elsewhere vouch for the effectiveness of Miswaak over toothbrush.

A study conducted by a group of dentists at King Saud University concluded that using Miswaak was at least as good as tooth brushing, if not better. There have been plenty of published studies on Miswaak and infact entire books published which study its oral and systemic benefits. Now, with all those studies chucked at you, you couldn't help but wonder why it is so effective. This can be attributed to its strong antibacterial properties. Another important aspect to consider is that its bristles are parallel to the handle rather than perpendicular which means effective cleaning between the teeth. Now, that's one natural toothbrush cum toothpaste cum floss. (Source: <http://www.dentalhealthsite.com/what-is-miswak>)