



An unsurpassed beauty tonic, jasmine finds favour in Indian as well as global households.

By Pallavi Shankar

JASMINE

FLOWER FETISH

The fragrant jasmine blossoms have long been celebrated as a symbol of beauty and sensuality in ancient Indian literature. The sensual white jasmine got its romantic reputation from Indian texts that have the love god Kama's arrows tipped with its dainty flowers. Interestingly, jasmine is also revered as a sacred flower, meant for offering to gods and braided generously in bridal hairdos. Sharada Dwivedi and princess Shalini Devi Holkar's book *Almond Eyes, Lotus Feet: Indian Traditions in Beauty and Health*, too, has women talking of jasmine as an indispensable beauty accessory.

The versatile flower is widely used in the beauty industry and in food preparations, but it is the perfumery where jasmine's heady fragrance has optimum utility. It takes 8,000

carefully hand-picked flowers to produce just one gram of jasmine oil and the flowers have to be gathered before dawn because that's the time when the smell of jasmine is at its peak. "Anyone who has grown up around jasmine tends to have a strong emotional response to its scent and this is what I wanted to evoke with my Jasmine Serum (Rs 1,150)," says Nina Naidu, founder of skincare brand Anokha in New York where her light-textured Jasmine Serum, made from the Indian jasmine plant, has acquired a cult status. Luxury Italian brand Bulgari's Jasmin Noir fragrance (Rs 1,250) launched last year is also popular.

In skin and haircare, jasmine's emollient effect is put to use in the preparation of moisturisers, face mists, body oils and shampoos. Jasmine calms skin irritations, and is especially good for hydrating dry skin and scalp. Forest Essentials has a complete range on jasmine, from soaps and shampoos to day lotions and essential oils, the latest in the line being the Fresh Jasmine and Aloe Vera Facial Tonic Mist (Rs 750).

Jasmine-based creams reduce stretch marks and scars and jasmine tea and perfumes help women deal with health issues like PMS and post-pregnancy depression. "Jasmine has mild antiseptic properties and it is usually combined with sandalwood and almond oil to produce a light moisturiser. The flowers and oil from the plant have been used specifically in Ayurvedic medicine for relief from migraine pain and coughs and also as an anti-depressant," explains Naidu.

Though now grown across the world, jasmine's origin is from India, say renowned botanists. There are many varieties: The north Indian *bela* is light with sweet notes while the *mogra* from south is stronger. "My father-in-law, a connoisseur of perfumes kept all the jasmine attars – *mogra*, *chameli*, *motia* and *jubi*. Each of them is to be used with greatest discretion; a little goes a long way," reads an extract from *Almond Eyes, Lotus Feet*. ■



1 Anokha Jasmine Serum, Rs 1,150 2 Forest Essentials Madurai Jasmine and Mogra Bath and Shower Oil, Rs 750 3 Bvlgari Jasmin Noir, Rs 1,250