



Toilet Soaps

Most make the grade (but leave the skin high and dry)

This boiled version of sodium salts of fatty acids is certainly one of the most essential toiletries that ensure healthy hygiene. Not only does it remove dirt from the grimy body, and claims to keep bacteria at bay, its fragrant properties helps one feel fresher, cleaner and better as well. (Any Jack-of-a-few-trades person, or a jugari as we would say in Hindi slang, would also know about its ability to fix and fasten loose zippers, tighten screws, kill pests or slip in tight bangles...) Come, let's read more on what lies inside your soap.

A Consumer Voice Report

Although the first recorded evidence of the manufacturing of soap-like materials dates back to around 2800 BC in ancient Babylon, commercial soap production began in England around the end of the 12th century. There, because of the heavy taxes, soap remained an expensive item until 1853, when the tax was repealed. In the 19th century, soap gained popularity throughout Europe and across British-occupied regions.

Today, in India, more than 700 registered companies manufacture bar/cake and liquid soaps of various kinds

with combined annual revenue of over Rs 1,700 crore. Various researches online indicate that the soap market in India increased at a compound annual growth rate of 9 per cent to 12 per cent between 2004 and 2009. The bar soap segment led the soap market in India in 2009, with a share of nearly 99 per cent.

Against this background, we decided to test popular brands of 'toilet soap' (not bathing bar, see box to know the difference) and see if they all comply with the set standard, what all they are made of, and if they really have what they claim to be their unique selling propositions.