"Abzan" (Sitz bath) - An effective mode of treatment in 'Ilaj bit Tadbīr (Regimenal Therapy)

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Abstract
Unani System of Medicine has four modes of treatment and these are: 'Ilaj bit Ghizā (Dietotherapy), 'Ilaj bit Tadbīr (Regimenal Therapy), 'Ilaj bīd Dawā (Pharmacotherapy) and 'Ilaj bit Yad (Surgery). Ilaj bit Tadbīr is a mode of treatment which works on the principle of modification or modulation in Ashāb sīta ḍarāriya (Six Essential Factors) for gaining health in sick persons or preventing from diseases in normal individuals. 'Ilaj bit Tadbīr includes a number of therapeutic interventions such as Hijāmāt (Cupping Therapy), Ṣalā-i-Arq (Leech Therapy), Fasd (Venesection), Duḥl (Massage), Nutūl (Irrigation), Abzan (Sitz bath) etc. Among these, abzan is a novel, simple, safe, economic, non-invasive and effective external mode of treatment for various disorders. It is basically a type of bath in which only buttock and hips are immersed in the water, either plain or medicated (Joshanda or Khaisanda) for therapeutic purposes. Sometimes, a whole body upto shoulder is immersed into the water. This regimen is used to relieve discomfort and pain in the lower as well as upper parts of the body, for example, haemorrhoids, uterine cramps, inflammatory bowel disease, an episiotomy, infections of bladder, prostate, vagina etc. Abzan also provides relief from itching in genital area. Even though no scientific evidence is available to indicate that abzan can promote faster healing but it is widely described in unani system of medicine for various body ailments.

Keywords: Ilaj bit Tadbīr, abzan, joshanda, Khaisanda, Sitz Bath, Harārāt, Barūdat

Introduction
Abzan (Sitz bath) is a simple, safe, economic, non-invasive and effective external regimen for various disorders. It is basically a type of bath in which only buttocks and hips are immersed into the water with the upper body, legs and feet out of the water. Plain or medicated water (Joshanda & Khaisanda) may be used for the therapeutic purpose. Sometimes, a whole body upto shoulder is immersed into the water [1, 2]. This regimen is used to relieve discomfort and pain in the lower as well as upper parts of the body, for example, haemorrhoids, uterine cramps, inflammatory bowel disease, an episiotomy, infections of bladder, prostate, vagina etc. Abzan also provides relief from itching in genital area. Even though no scientific evidence is available to indicate that abzan can promote faster healing but it is widely described in unani system of medicine for various body ailments.

Historical Background
The therapeutic use of water, Joshanda, Khaisanda has long history dating back to ancient cultures. Abzan has been included in the most popular and effective therapies. Ali Ibn-i-Abbas Majoooodi describes in his book Kamil-uss-sana that when the time of delivery is near or the female is in labour pain advise her to take Abzan ĥār (Hot Sitz Bath) [3]. Ibn-i-Sina has mentioned in his book Alqanīn-Fiṭ-ṭib that if the female is suffering from Usr-e-wiladat, suggest her to take Abzan ḥār (Hot Sitz Bath) [4].

Definition
Abzan is a type of bath in which hips and buttocks are immersed in water, either plain or medicated (Joshanda, Khaisanda), for the therapeutic effects.

Types
1. Abzan ĥār (Hot Sitz Bath)
2. Abzan bārd (Cold Sitz Bath)
3. Abzan mo tadh (Neutral Sitz Bath)
4. Abzan murrakkab (Alternate Hot and Cold Sitz Bath)
Åbzân Hâr (Hot Sitz Bath)
Åbzân hâr is one of the easiest and effective ways to ease the pain and discomfort caused by various diseases. Hot water, Joshanda/Khaisanda of specific drugs is used for the purpose of åbzân hâr resulting in increased tissue temperature. The temperature of the warm water should be between 95°F-105°F/35 – 41 °C. The level of water in the bath tub should not be above the navel. This type of åbzân is mostly used worldwide with promising therapeutic effects in various diseases.

Physiological effects of ḥârârât on the body
1. Systemic
A. Vasodilatation

2. Local
A. Temperature sensitive nerve endings send impulse to hypothalamus and make the centre aware about the local temperature changes
B. Increased capillary permeability
C. Increase blood flow
D. Increased metabolism

Therapeutic uses of ḥârârât
a) Increases blood flow
b) Softens exudates
c) Decreases pain
d) Relaxes muscle
e) Psychological relaxation
f) Decreases muscle contracture
g) Improves joint range of motion
h) Decreases joint stiffness

Phy physiological effects of harârat include pain relief, increases in blood flow and metabolism, and increased elasticity of connective tissues. Increasing tissue temperature stimulates vasodilatation and increases tissue blood flow, which is thought to promote healing by increasing the supply of nutrients and oxygen to the site of injury. The rate of İstehâlâ (metabolism) in local tissue is also increased by harârat, which may further promote healing as Tabî at Mudâbbira-e-Badân works on healing instead of İstehâlâ. Ḥârârat also induces changes in the viscoelastic properties of collagen tissues which can be demonstrated in the mechanism of improvement of range of movement[5].

Åbzân Bârid (Cold Sitz Bath)
When åbzân is done with cold water, either medicated or plain, it is called åbzân bârid. The temperature of this water should not be too low to bear except few conditions where ice-cold water is recommended for the procedure. In such conditions where ice-cold water is indicated, the length of immersion into water should be decreased. Burûdât is basically useful in the management of acute injury/trauma, chronic pain, muscle spasm, inflammation, and oedema.

Physiological effects of burûdât on the body
1. Systemic
A. Vasoconstriction
B. Piloeerection
C. Shivering

2. Local
A. Temperature sensitive nerve endings send signals to hypothalamus
B. Local vasoconstriction
C. Decreased capillary refill
D. Decreased cellular metabolism

Therapeutic uses of burûdât
A. Decreases inflammation
B. Relaxes muscles
C. Decreases the pain by numbing the area
D. Local anaesthetic effects
E. Decreases bleeding
F. Slows bacterial growth

Burûdât has multiple physiological effects on injured tissues. Decreasing temperature of the skin and muscle reduces blood flow to the bârid tissues by activating a sympathetic vasoconstrictive reflex. The decrease in blood flow, induced by burûdât, reduces oedema and slows the delivery of inflammatory mediators, reducing inflammation of the affected area. Decreasing tissue temperature also reduces the metabolic demand of hypoxic tissues, potentially preventing secondary hypoxic damage in injured tissues. Burûdât also induces a local anaesthetic effect by decreasing the activation threshold of the tissue nociceptors and the conduction velocity of nerve signals. Burûdât also reduces muscle spasm via inhibition of a spinal cord reflex loop[5].

Åbzân Mo’tadîl (Neutral Sitz Bath)
Normal water in term of temperature, either plain or medicated, is used somet ime for the treatment of various diseases. Patients with diabetic neuropathy can use this type of åbzân safely.

Åbzân Murakkab (Alternate Hot and Cold Sitz Bath)
Several variations of the procedure can be used with different therapeutic effects depending upon the temperature of water and the length of time spent immersed. Åbzân murakkab is a combination of åbzân hâr and åbzân bârid, taken into use alternatively. In this procedure, a patient stays in åbzân hâr for 5 minutes followed by åbzân bârid for less than one minute only. The cycle is repeated for atleast five times and finished in åbzân bârid. This type of åbzân is considered having a soothing effect. A towel soaked in ice-cold water may be used in place of cold water.

Effects of Åbzân Murakkab
It has been suggested that åbzân murakkab causes a “pumping effect” due to the cycle of vasoconstriction and vasodilatation, therefore facilitating İmala-e-Mavad resulting in removal of the oedematous conditions. Åbzân murakkab increases the venous and lymphatic flow of fluids. It is very important to achieve the adequate deep tissue vasoconstriction in order to get the results because any madda which has been stagnant in the tissues, after absorption, needs vasoconstriction to be diverted. Constriction increases the intramural pressure in the blood vessels, causing the fluid to move with the valves in the veins, thereby preventing the backflow of the fluid. This would produce a beneficial effect of minimising the influence of accumulated morbid material at the injured site while the healing process is taking place.

Manual Operating Procedure (MOP)
Åbzân is frequently prescribed but proper instructions as how to perform it are seldom given to patients. In general, the
water is expected to cover only the perineum and lower pelvis. Immersing other parts of the body in warm water may lead to systemic vasodilatation and decrease circulation to the perineal area. Following are the instructions which should be followed for the procedure of ābzan.

1. Take an appropriate sized bath tub and clean it with lukewarm water mixed with bleaching powder followed by rinsing thoroughly.
2. Fill the tub with prescribed liquid upto 2-3 inches.
3. In case of ābzan hār, the water should be warm and not too hot to cause burns or discomfort.
4. In case of ābzan bārid, the water should be cold, but not too cold to cause discomfort to the patients.
5. Ask the patient to remove the cloth and get into the tub to immerse his perineum into water, bend his legs or dangle them over the side of the tub to keep them out of the water and ensure the perineum is submerged.
6. Ask the patient to stay in water for at least 15-20 minutes in case of ābzan hār.
7. Ask the patient to stay in water for at least 5-10 minutes in case of ābzan bārid.
8. In case of ābzan murakkab, ask the patient to stay in hot water for 5 minutes followed by a stay in cold water for less than one minute alternatively and the cycle is repeated up to 5 times finishing on ābzan bārid.
9. Ask the patient to dry himself with a clean cotton towel
10. Instruct the patient not to rub or scrub the perineum, as this may cause pain and irritation.
11. The procedure is completed by rinsing the bath tub thoroughly.

![Fig 1: Ābzan](image)

### Indications and Specific Formulations [6]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Indications</th>
<th>Name of Drugs</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bawaseer-e-Baadi (Haemorrhoids)</td>
<td>Post-e-Anar, Maazu, Sirka</td>
<td>Boil Post-e-Anar and Maazu in water and filter it. Mix Sirka in the filtered water and use it for the patients of bawaseer-e-baadi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bawaseer-e-Damvi (Bleeding Piles)</td>
<td>Zaj, Sibr, Kundur, Dam-ul-Akhwain, Gulnaar, Mameesa</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of bawaseer-e-damvi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Istirkha-e-Maq’d</td>
<td>Abhal, Qust, Joz-us-Saroo, Sumbul, Mur, Izkhar</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Istirkha-e-Maq’d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Khurooj-e-Maq’ad (Rectal Prolapse)</td>
<td>Gul-e-Surkh, Adas, Makoh, Simaq OR Post-e-Anar, Juft Baloot, Gulnaar, Maazu, Berg-e-Moorad</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Khurooj-e-Maq’ad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Qillat-e-Haiz (Oligomenorrhoea)</td>
<td>Fotanj, Suddab, Mushktaramasheeh</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Qillat-e-Haiz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Warm-e-Raham (Metritis)</td>
<td>Roghan-e-Gul</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Warm-e-Raham. Mix Roghan-e-Gul with water and use for Ābzan in case of Warm-e-Raham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sartan-e-Raham:</td>
<td>Berg-e-Khatmi, Karnah, Banafsa, Tukhm-e-Katan</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Sartan-e-Raham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Shiqaq-e-Raham:</td>
<td>Maazoo, Shaa-e-Baloot, Gulnar, Gul-e-Surkh</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Shiqaq-e-Raham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nafakhat-ur-Raham:</td>
<td>Baboona, Nakhooona, Shibbat, Marzanjosh, Mastangi, Pudina, Suddab, Tukhm-e-Karaafs, Baadyaan, Baranjasif, Zeera, Nankhwah</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Nafakhat-ur-Raham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ikhtenaq-ur-Raham (Hysteria):</td>
<td>Kashim, Tukhm-e-Hulba, Tukhm-e-Katan, Marzanjosh, Qaisoom/Afsanteen</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Ikhtenaq-ur-Raham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Inzilaq-ur-Raham (Uterine Prolapse):</td>
<td>Izkhar, Aas, Gul-e-Surkh</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Inzilaq-ur-Raham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Waja-ur-Raham (Uterine Pain),</td>
<td>Lukewarm Water</td>
<td>Take lukewarm water and use it for Ābzan in case of Waja-ur-Raham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Herbal Formula</td>
<td>Preparation Method</td>
<td>Application</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Kharish-e-Miq'ad (Pruritus in Ano):</td>
<td>Lukewarm Water</td>
<td>Take lukewarm water and use it for Aabzan in case of Kharish-e-Miq'ad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ehtibas-e-Tams:</td>
<td>Shibbat, Marzanjosh, Pudina, Suddab, Baboona, Nakhoona, Sa’tar</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Ehtibas-e-Tams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kasrat-e-Tams:</td>
<td>Jau Muqashshar, Biranj Biryan, Post-e-Anar</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Kasrat-e-Tams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Kasrat-e-Isqaat:</td>
<td>Sandal Safaid, Beg-e-Neelofar, Habbul Aas, Aqaqiya, Gulnaar, Gul-e-Surkh</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Kasrat-e-Isqaat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Zof-e-Kulliya:</td>
<td>Shibb Zaj</td>
<td>Mix all the medicine in water and warm it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Zof-e-Kulliya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Reeh-ul-Kulliya:</td>
<td>Berg-e-Qinnab, Karam, Shibbat, Hulba, Bazar katan, Baadyaan, Khaar-e-Khasak, Nakhoona, Baboona</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Reeh-ul-Kulliya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Waja-ul-Kulliya:</td>
<td>Baboona, Shibbat, Tukhm-e-Khatmi, Berg-e-Karnab, Podina</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Waja-ul-Kulliya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Warm-e-Kulliya:</td>
<td>Baboona, Nakhoona, Tukhm-e-Khatmi, Saboos-e-Gundum, Jaw Muqashshar</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Warm-e-Kulliya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Hisaat-e-Kulliya:</td>
<td>Khaar-e-Khasak, Baboona, Marzanjosh, Karafs, Karnab, Shibbat, Berg-e-Khatmi, Parsiyaoosa</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Hisaat-e-Kulliya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Warm-e-Masana Haar (Cystitis):</td>
<td>Dar-e-Sheeshan, Qaroomana, Shibt, Sa’d, Izkhar, Hamama, Tukhm-e-Katan OR Shaljam, Gokhroo, Karnab OR Banafsha, Berg Neelofar, Baboona, Nakhoona[7]</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Warm-e-Masana Haar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Waja-ul-Masana Haar:</td>
<td>Banafsha, Neelofar, Tukhm-e-Khatmi, Makoh</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Waja-ul-Masana Haar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Baul-ud-Dam (Haematuria):</td>
<td>Adas Muqashshar, Post-e-Anar, Bechi, Maazu, Asbatur Ra’ee</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of Baul-ud-Dam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Zaheer-e-Sadiq (Dysentery):</td>
<td>Khubbazi Soya Nakhoona Baboona</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it. Use this filtered water for the patients of zaheer-e-sadiq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Zaheer-e-Wabai</td>
<td>Ice –Cold water</td>
<td>Use ice-cold water for the Aabzan in the patients of Zaheer-e-Wabai, (Antaki)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Is’hal-e-Wabai:</td>
<td>Ice –Cold water</td>
<td>Use ice-cold water for the Aabzan in the patients of Is’hal-e-Wabai (Antaki)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Su-e-Tanaffis:</td>
<td>Banafsha, Khatmi</td>
<td>Boil all the medicine in water and filter it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Indian Medicine</td>
<td>Use this filtered water for the patients of Su-e-Tanaffus</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Zeequnnafs</td>
<td>Lukewarm water</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Takhaluss-e-Hijab:</td>
<td>Lukewarm water</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>Jau-ul-Kalb,</td>
<td>Ice–Cold water</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>Fuwaq:</td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Zaheer-e-Baarid (Dysentery):</td>
<td>Khatmi, Shibbat, Nakhoona, Baboona, Bazar Katan, Makoh</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Ailaoos:</td>
<td>Baboona, Nakhoona, Karnab, Shibbat</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Contraindications**

1. Acute profuse bleeding  
2. Open wounds  
3. Pressure sores  
4. Acute fever  
5. Acute skin infections  
6. Contagious skin rashes  
7. Diabetic patients with diabetic neuropathy  
8. Hypotensive patients  
9. Seizure  
10. Thermal nerve deficiency  
11. Raynaud’s disease

**Complications**

Numbness sensation after Aabzan bârid when skin temperature decreases below 59°F, Frostbite (white, waxy, mottled blue skin), Burn, Palpitation, Bleeding

**Conclusion**

The indications and specific formulations mentioned by eminent unani physicians show the extensive use of ābzan for the management of various disorders since time immemorial. On the basis of theoretical description, it can be concluded that ābzan seems to be a very effective as well as safe and patient friendly mode of treatment but it is the demand of the hour to validate the claims of ancient unani physicians about the effectiveness of ābzan therapy on scientific basis.

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**Author’s Statement**

Competing Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

**References**
