

History of cosmetics

S K Chaudhri, N K Jain

Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Dr. H. S. Gour Vishwavidyalaya, Sagar - 470 003, Madhya Pradesh, India

Cosmetics have become part of our routine. Their use has increased significantly in recent years however the continuous use of cosmetics over prolonged time may result into various undesirable effects, which may be serious at times. This review is an attempt to trace out the history of cosmetics used by different civilizations over centuries

Key words: *Cosmetics, history, ancient times, modern*

INTRODUCTION

The word cosmetae^[1,2] was first used to describe Roman slaves whose function was to bathe men and women in perfume. In Egypt,^[3-5] as early as 10,000 BC, men and women used scented oils and ointments to clean and soften their skin and mask body odor. Dyes and paints were used to color the skin, body and hair. They rouged their lips and cheeks, stained their nails with henna and lined their eyes and eyebrows heavily with kohl. Kohl was a dark-colored powder made of crushed antimony, burnt almonds, lead, oxidized copper, ochre, ash, malachite, chrysocolla (a blue-green copper ore) or any combination thereof. It was applied with a small stick. The upper and lower eyelids were painted in a line that extended to the sides of the face for an almond effect. In addition to reducing sun glare, it was believed that kohl eyeliner could restore poor eyesight and reduce eye infection. Kohl was kept in a small, flat-bottomed pot with a wide, tiny rim and a flat, disk-shaped lid.

Cosmetics were an inherent part of Egyptian^[3] hygiene and health. Oils and creams were used for protection against the hot Egyptian sun and dry winds. Myrrh, thyme, marjoram, chamomile, lavender, lily, peppermint, rosemary, cedar, rose, aloe, olive oil, sesame oil and almond oil provided the basic ingredients of most perfumes that were used in religious ritual and embalming the dead. For the lips, cheeks and nails, a clay called red ochre was ground and mixed with water. Henna was used to dye fingernails yellow or

orange. Makeup was stored in special jars that were kept in special makeup boxes. Women would carry their makeup boxes to parties and keep them under their chairs. Although men also wore makeup, they did not carry makeup kits with them.

A REVIEW

The ancient Egyptians took great pride in their appearance and cleanliness. Most Egyptians bathed daily in the river or out of a water basin at home. Wealthy homes had a bathroom where servants would pour jugs of water over their master (equivalent to a modern day shower). The runoff was drained through a pipe to water the garden. A cleansing cream made of animal or vegetable oil mixed with powdered lime and perfume was used instead of soap. People rubbed themselves daily with perfumed unguent oil that had been soaked in scented wood. The mixture was left in a pot until the oil absorbed the wood scent. Perfumed oil was used to prevent the skin from drying out in the harsh climate. At parties, servants would place a cone of perfumed grease on the head of each guest. The grease had a cooling effect as it melted and ran down the faces of each guest. Everyone, regardless of age or gender, wore makeup. Highly polished silver and copper mirrors aided the application of makeup.

Some hairstyles were very similar to that of today's. The common folk wore their hair short. Young girls usually kept their hair in pigtailed while boys had shaved heads with one braided lock worn to one side. Egyptian men shaved their head in order to avoid getting lice. Wigs made of sheep's wool or human hair were worn by men and women to parties, official functions and for protection from heat. A hairpiece used to enhance real hair. When not in use, wigs were stored in special boxes that were displayed on a stand at home. To preserve hair from the effects of sun, it was treated with a moisturizing cream in the shape of a cosmetic

Address for correspondence:

Prof. Narendra Jain, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences,
Dr. H. S. Gour University, Sagar - 470 003,
Madhya Pradesh, India. E-mail: jnarendr@yahoo.co.in

DOI: 10.4103/0973-8398.56292