HARAMEKHALA – A MASTERPIECE ON INDIAN COSMETICS

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ABSTRACT

The concept of beauty and cosmetics is as old as civilization. Each and every individual wants to look beautiful. This is the reason we find the usage of cosmetic preparations since Vedic period. Later in post Vedic period, Kavya, Natya and also in the treatises of Ayurveda we find references of various preparations of cosmetics. Haramekhala is one such treatise of humanities explaining various preparations of cosmetics using simple herbal drugs.

KEY WORDS: Haramekhala, Māhuka, Cosmetics

To Cite this article
INTRODUCTION:

Haramekhala is a medieval work on Humanities especially documenting the cosmetical preparations prevalent in medieval India. Māhuka who lived during 9th century A.D. in central India authored this work in Prakrit language supported by Sanskrit. The only original manuscript that forms the basis of the publication of Haramekhala was obtained from Brahmashree C. Narayanan Bhattatiri Avarugal of Paramburillom of Tiruvella near Kottayam. Later this Manuscript was published by Dept. of Publications, Oriental Manuscript’s library, Trivandrum by the authority of his Highness Maharaja of Travancore in the year 1938. The manuscript was very old written about 800–900 years before and was deplorably worn and unreadable. Shri K. Sambashiva Shastri edited this book in two parts. The first part contains 2nd, 3rd, 4th chapters and the second part contains 5th chapter. The manuscript of 1st chapter is not obtained by him. There is information that P.V Sharma wrote an article named “Haramekhala Tantra (the first chapter on medicine)” in 1986 which is published in Ancient Science of Life 5, 3 which contains a translation of first chapter of Haramekhala Tantra according to the text manuscript P.G.I.6 of the collection of B.H.U.

The concept of beauty and cosmetics is as old as race or civilization. It may also vary among people belonging to different continents or cultures, but the desire to look more attractive, young and seductive is a common factor. The earliest references for cosmetics are traced in Rig-Veda. Later the Vedas, Brahmans and Upanishads give ample references for cosmetics used in India. In later works like Puranas, Kavyas and Ayurvedic Samhitas various cosmoeutical preparations are specifically mentioned. Māhuka carried further the concept and application of ancient Indian cosmetology into a more organized form. Though Haramekhala seems to be a complete hand book on ancient Indian cosmetology, Māhuka honestly agrees that he just followed the earlier Acharyas in this regard. He calls them as Mahabuddhi or Mahamathi – the enlightened elders. These original cosmetic preparations were further developed into precise branch by Māhuka.

Varieties of cosmetical preparations such as Adhara Prasadhana Yogas (Lip Balm), Netra Prasadhana Yogas (Eye care preparations), Mukhvasana Gulika (Mouth fresheners), Snana Choorna (Bathing powders), Udvartana Choorna (Massaging powders), Sugandhi Lepa Yogas (Anointments), Romashatana Yogas (Depilatory agents), Various Varnya Yogas (Whitening preparations), Hair care preparations, Foot care preparations etc, are found in Haramekhala in systematically arranged form.

Cosmetical preparations in Haramekhala

Some of the simpler and special, elsewhere not found, easy to prepare cosmetical preparations of Haramekhala are enumerated here under. They can be developed into special formulations using modern technology.

Adhara Prasadhana Yogas

Cracked lips, besides being painful, spoil the beauty of the face. Māhuka recommended certain remedies in such cases along with coloring of the lips. There are 4 various formulations mentioned by Māhuka for healthy and colorful lips. For e.g. Paste is prepared from Sarjarasa (Resin of Shorea robusta), Tila taila (oil of Sesamum indicum) and Saindhava (Sodium chloridum). If this paste is applied to the lips it cures cracking.

Tilaka Yogas:

Māhuka mentions certain “Tilaka - Bindi” which are mainly used for Vashikarana purpose. He mentioned these for both man and woman and also for the kings. Drugs like Gorocana (Benzoar), Mahashila (Realgar), Kumkuma (Crocus sativus Linn.), Tamala patra (Cinnamomom tamala), Bhringaraja (Eclipta alba), Aparajita (Clitoria ternata), Sahadevi (Veronica cinerea Lese.), Vishnukranta (Evolvulus alsinoides Linn.), Kumari (Aloe barbadensis) and Rakta Karavira (Nerium odorum soland.) are used for this purpose. Gorocana (Bezoar) is the main
ingredient in every preparation which induces color to the formula.\(^3\)

**Netra Prasadhan Yoga/ Eye care preparations:**

The beauty of face mainly depends on the eyes. If eyes are healthy and beautiful person will catch others eyes. Māhuka incorporated various Anjana preparations in Haramekhala which not only beautifies the eye but also protects it. Many Vashikarana Anjana preparations are also mentioned by Māhuka which can be integrated in the preparations for beautification of eyes as they are mainly used for attraction purposes. Totally 6 such Yogas are mentioned.\(^4\)

For e.g. Souviranjana/Nilanjana prepared from the fine powder of Candana (Santalum album), Karpura (Borneo camphor), Truti (Elettaria cardamomum), Gandhapatra (Cinnamomum cassia), Kusha (Saussurea lappa), Yashtimadhu (Glycyrrhiza glabra) and Nagakesara (Mesua ferrea) which are taken in equal part is very aromatic, auspicious and used to beautify the eyes.

**Romashatana Yoga/ Depilatory agents:**

The presence of hair on arm, face, legs and in pubic area is considered as uncomfortable. Certain paste, oil preparations are considered to get rid of this. There are 3 references of depilatory agents in Haramekhala.\(^5\)

For e.g. Oil extracted from seeds of Koushambi/Koshataki (Luffa aegyptiaca) is applied over pubic area after shaving. Then there will not be again growth of the hair.

**Skin lightening:**

A fair skin and thin body has always been an attraction. Everyone wants to look fair and slim. Māhuka mentions various paste and powder preparations for the purpose of Lepana (anointing), Udvantana (massaging) and Snana (bathing) which fulfill the above criteria. While signifying the Udvantana Yogas, Māhuka describes that a proper Udvantana procedure can even slim up Kumbhadasi, means stout body servants doing hard physical activities. He describes, it also cleanses and enhances the texture of skin.

**Skin lightening:**

For e.g. Paste prepared from Tila (Sesamum indicum), Sarshapa (Brassica campestris), Haridra (Curcuma longa), Daruharidr (Berberis species) and Kusha (Saussurea lappa) is applied to the body and then bathing is done. It makes the body fairer.

**Hair care preparations:**

Many remedies for hair fall, premature graying of hair, dandruff, boils in the scalp etc are mentioned by Māhuka. Preparations for hair wash, growth of hair and to get rid of hair lice are integrated by him. Fumigation to protect the hair and to produce aroma is also mentioned. In 4\(^{th}\) chapter he mentioned totally 27 Yogas which help in hair care. There are 10 preparations which are used as fumigation for hair.\(^6\)

For e.g. Juice of Phanivalli (Piper betel) is mixed with Parada/Mercury and applied to the comb. If this is used for combing the lice will stick to it. Application of paste of Amalaki (Embelica officinalis), Kusha (Saussurea lappa), Nilotpala/Indivara (Nelumbium speciosum Willd), Lalada/Ushira (Vetiveria zizanioides) and Bala (Seda cordifolia Linn) prevents falling of hair and make it thick and beautiful.
Preparations that increase the size of the Ear pinnae (Karnapali Vridhikara Yogas):

There are totally 8 formulations mentioned by Māhuka which helps in increasing the ear pinna. [8]

For e.g.
Massaging the ear pinna with a medicated ghee processed with powder of Gunja (Abrus precatorius) and milk of buffalo increases its size.

Mouth fresheners:

Many preparations for Kavala and Gandusha which eradicates the bad odor of the mouth are mentioned by Māhuka. Pills in the name of Mukhavasana Gulika are also cited in Haramekhala. Totally 12 Yogas which are used in the form of mouth fresheners as they are prepared by using various drugs having aroma are mentioned. [9]

For e.g.
Drugs like Aguru (Aquilaria agallocha), Candana (Santalum album), Sitasharkara (Cane Sugar), Harenu (Vitex agnus-castus Linn.), Jati phala (Myristica fragrans), Kasturi (Moschus), Kumkuma (Crocus sativus Linn), Jati patra (Myristica fragrans Houtt), Tugakshiri (Bambusa arundinacea) and Lavanga (Caryophyllus aromaticus Linn) – all taken in equal quantity, Karpura (Borneo camphor) and Kolaphala (Ziziphus jujuba) – 4 parts and 16 parts of Khadira Kashaya (Decoction of Acasia catechu) are triturated with Sahakara Taila (oil prepared from Mangifera indica Linn) to prepare pills. This is a good mouth freshener.

Facials skin care preparations:

Preparations which remove the unwanted discoloration of the face and make it fair are stated by Māhuka. Some of the preparations are very simpler and are according to the seasonal availability. He used medicated oil, ghee and ointment preparations for this purpose. Totally 11 different Yogas mentioned which beautify the facial skin. [10]

For e.g.
Application of paste of Ingudi phala Majja (fruit pulp of Balanitis aegyptiaca) cures Vyanga.

Application of pulp of Badara (Ziziphus jujuba) along with honey and butter cures the Vyanga.

Stana Vardhaka Yogas/Breast developers:

Many formulations used for Abhyanga (massaging), Lepa (Application), Nasya and Udvaritana which increase in size of the breast and make them firm and beautiful are mentioned in Haramekhala. Sthana vardhaka Yogas are the special contribution of Haramekhalakara in the field of cosmetic by using herbal drugs. Māhuka mentioned totally 10 preparations for increasing the size of breast. [11] For e.g.

Nasya with Tandulajala (rice washed water) along with Strotonjana makes the breast firm, large and beautiful.

Application of paste of Kushta (Saussurea lappa), Vacha (Acorus calamus) and Nagabala (Sida veronicaefolia) triturated with fresh butter of buffalo makes the breast large and beautiful.

Foot care preparations:

As like other parts of body, foot is also an important part to be considered as per cosmetology. A cracked unhealthy foot always spoils the dignity and personality of a person who looks perfect in every other sense. There are totally 4 preparations which help in maintaining the beauty of foot. [12] For e.g.

Application of paste prepared from Gula/Guda/Jaggery, Gairika (Red ochre), Guggulu (Balsamodendron mukul), Rala (Resin of Shorea robusta), Saindhava (Sodium chloridum), Honey and Ghee cures the cracking of foot.
Rejuvenation process/General body enhancers:

Māhuka explains some of the rejuvenation preparations by using which a person can become a best orator (Vageeshwara), his perception power of ear, nose, eye, mind etc get enhanced. They also prevent aging, falling and graying of hair. In total they help in the maintenance and enhancement of complete health of a person making him look younger. Totally 15 various Rasayana Yogas have been mentioned by him.[13]

For e.g.
If powder of Amalaki (Phyllanthus emblica) is licked with water or honey and ghee during evening time it gives strength to mind, eyes, nose and ears and makes the person look like young.

General Body care deodorants:

Māhuka mentioned a variety of Sugandha Taila (aromatic oils), Vilepana Yogas (anointing preparations), Snana choornas (bathing powders) and Udvartana choornas (massaging powder) which act as deodorants by their regular use. Season wise usage of these with particular drug combination is also found in the book. Apart from deodorizing the body they also help in preventing skin ailments and keep the body healthy. Explanation of preparing various Gandha (pastes) which are having the aroma of fragrant drugs like Bakula (Mimusops elengi), Nagakesara (Mesua ferrea), Kuvalaya (Nymphaea nouchali), Campaka (Santalum album), Indivara (Nelumbium speciosum Willd), Karavira (Nerium odorum), Ketaki (Pandanus odoratissimus), Mallika (Jasminum sambac) are found in Haramekha. These are used to apply over body as well as to scent the daily belongings.[14]

For e.g.
Oil prepared from equal quantities of Truti/Ela (Elettaria cardamomum), Dala/Tamala Patra (Cinnamomum tamala), Jala/Hribera (Pavonia odorata Willd), Kusha/Vishana (Eragrostis cynosuroides), Nakha (Helix aspera), Sillhaka (Liquidamber orientalis) – one part each and Shilapushpa/Shaileya (Parmelia perlata) – double the quantity of all above drugs is beneficial for massaging in Sharad Rutu.

CONCLUSION

A thorough review of Haramekha leads to an assumption that the cosmetical preparations were made easily available with simpler procedures. Māhuka covered all aspects of cosmetology prevalent during his period. More than three hundred preparations are discussed in Haramekha making the work which can be called as a master piece in Indian Cosmetology. It is astonishing to note that Māhuka has classified the subject matter in a scientific way in different headings covering all aspects of modern cosmetology. Many of the preparations are worth trying and hence relevant in modern times. Most of the formulations are made from easily available drugs and they are simpler in form. On this ground we can rightly call Māhuka as the “Father of Indian Cosmetology”

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