

# History of cosmetics

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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<sup>[1,2]</sup> was first used to describe Roman slaves whose function was to bathe men and women in perfume. In Egypt,<sup>[3-5]</sup> 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<sup>[3]</sup> 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

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cone. The cone would gradually melt and give the wig a pleasant fragrance.

Breath was freshened by chewing on pellets made of ground tamarisk leaves. There is no evidence of toothbrushes or toothpaste. Bad breath and bad body odor were grounds for shame. Beautiful smells were essential to the Egyptian belief that “cleanliness is godliness.” Egyptians had learnt the art to distill essential oils thousands of years ago. The Egyptian science of perfumery eroded over the centuries “until its final rupture in the Middle Ages.” “Smell” was incomprehensibly fundamental in Egyptian society and perfumery began as a secret art in Egypt that was perfected by 2500 BC. It was practiced by the priesthood in the temple of Denderah where pharmaceutical products were made. One of the temple walls shows a method of oil extraction and distillation that is still used by Egyptian farmers today. The function of perfumery was to achieve spiritual rather than physical perfection by perfecting the physical, emotional and mental aspects of human existence. Perfumes made the body function perfectly. Ra, the Sun God, was the source of all smell. Under Egyptian belief, “to smell beautifully was a sign of holiness,” and only perfect-smelling persons would be received by the gods when they died. Egypt was deeply driven by spiritual concerns and virtually everything invented had a spiritual application, e.g. the science of mummification was the immediate beneficiary of perfumery.

Cedar oil was considered the most sacred of all the distilled oils and the principle oil used in mummification. Egyptian priests discovered the true power of oils and believed that certain types of perfumes could add to one’s personal power. Because the neighboring civilizations were perceived as primitive, hostile, morally corrupt, spiritually inept, lacking the maturity, evolution or self-control to use oils, the priests did not want them to have their knowledge. It was believed that the spiritual essence of plants had healing qualities and supernatural power; the embodiment of the plant’s healing spirit, rather than the plant’s chemistry made the extraction process and the oil sacred. The seven sacred oils used for mummification were The Festival Perfume, Hekenu, The Syrian Balsam, Nechemem, Anointing Oil, The Best Cedar Oil and The Best Libyan Oil. These oils also formed the foundation of ritual Egyptian magic. The most famous Egyptian fragrance, kyphi, meaning “welcome to the gods,” was said to induce hypnotic states. The City of the Sun, Heliopolis, burned resins in the morning, myrrh at noon and kyphi at sunset to the Sun God, Ra. Besides, from religious use, kyphi could lull one to sleep, alleviate anxieties, increase dreaming, eliminate sorrow, treat asthma and act as a general antidote for toxins. One recorded recipe included a heady blend of calamus, henna, spikenard, frankincense, myrrh, cinnamon, cypress and terebinth (pistachio resin) and other ingredients. The ingredients were also mixed and matched for variety. Cubes of incense were prepared by mixing ground gums and plants with honey, a similar technique used by the Babylonians that the Greeks and Romans adopted.

Few evidences of cosmetic usage have been found in China<sup>1</sup> around 3000 BC. Chinese people began to stain their fingernails with gum arabic, gelatin, beeswax and egg. The colors used represented social class. The Chou dynasty royals wore gold and silver and later royals wore black or red. The Chinese used one word to represent perfume, incense and fragrance. That word was heang. Heang was divided into six aesthetic moods: Tranquil, reclusive, luxurious, beautiful, refined or noble. (Keville, Green) The Chinese upper classes made lavish use of fragrance during the T’ang dynasties that began in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD and continued until the end of the Ming dynasty in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Their bodies, baths, clothing, homes and temples were all richly scented, as was ink, paper, cosmetics and sachets tucked into their garments. China imported jasmine-scented sesame oil from India, Persian rosewater via the silk route and, eventually, Indonesian aromatics – cloves, gum benzoin, ginger, nutmeg and patchouli – through India. The famous *Materia Medica* *Pen Ts’ao* was published in China during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It discusses almost 2000 herbs and contains a separate section on 20 essential oils. Jasmine was used as a general tonic; rose improved digestion, liver and blood; chamomile reduced headaches, dizziness and colds; ginger treated coughs and malaria.

Cosmetics were used in Persia and what is today the Middle East from ancient periods. After Arab tribes converted to Islam and conquered those areas, in some areas cosmetics were only restricted if they were to disguise the real look in order to mislead or cause uncontrolled desire. All branches of Islam set a number of thumb rules relating to purity and cleanliness, whether in its physical or spiritual form. For some branches, the general rule is outlined by the Quran, “For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.” Muhammad also declared, “Allah is Beautiful and He loves beauty.” On the other hand, some fundamentalist branches of Islam forbid the use of cosmetics.

An early cosmetologist was the physician Abu’al-Qassim al-Zahrawi<sup>1</sup>, or Abulcassis (936-1013 AD), who wrote the medical encyclopedia *Al-Tasreef* in 30 volumes. Chapter 19 was devoted to cosmetics. As the treatise was translated to Latin, the cosmetic chapter was used in the West. Al-Zahrawi considered cosmetics a branch of medicine, which he called *Medicine of Beauty* (*Adwiyat al-Zinah*). He dealt with perfumes, scented aromatics and incense. There were perfumed stocks rolled and pressed in special moulds, perhaps the earliest antecedents of the present day lipsticks and solid deodorants. He used oily substances called *Adhan* for medication and beautification.

Henna<sup>1,6]</sup> has been used in India since around the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is used either as a hair dye or in the art of mehndi, in which complex designs are painted on to the hands and feet, especially before a Hindu wedding. Henna is also used

in some North African cultures. African henna designs tend to be bolder and Indian designs more complex. Women in India did not use soap either but instead used a turmeric germicidal cream and the treatment composed of gram flour or wheat husk mixed with milk. The wheat husk would remove dead cell tissue. On festive occasions, special bathing cosmetics in the form of *Ubton* are widely used in India, even today. The turmeric preparations are used by newly married brides during their wedding. The present form is cosmetic preparations containing turmeric, almonds, sandal, etc. Apart from cosmetic fragrances, they provide good antiseptic properties.

India was famous in the earlier days for using *Itra*, similar to the modern scents marketed by various companies, but was in a concentrated form. These were made from various Indian flowers' fragrances. These are popularly used during festive occasions.

The use of *kohl*<sup>[7]</sup> or *kajal* has a long history in the Hindu culture. The use of traditional preparations of *kohl* on children and adults was considered to have health benefits, although in the United States, it has been linked to lead poisoning and is prohibited. *Soot*,<sup>[8]</sup> also called *lampblack* or *carbon black*, is a dark powdery deposit of unburned fuel residues, usually composed mainly of amorphous carbon. It is a major component of smoke from the combustion of carbon-rich organic fuels in the lack of sufficient oxygen. *Soot* is generally sticky and accumulates in chimneys and other surfaces exposed to smoke.

In Japan, lipstick made of crushed safflower petals was used to paint the eyebrows and edges of the eyes and the lips, whereas rice powder was used to color the face and back. Sometimes bird droppings were also used to compile a lighter color. Even today, skin whitening continues to represent the ideal of beauty.

In the middle ages, the lower classes had to work outside on agricultural jobs. The typically light-colored European skin was darkened by exposure to the sun. The higher class a person was, the more leisure time he or she had to spend indoors, which kept the skin pale. Thus, the highest classed of the European society, able to spend all their time protected from the sun, frequently had the lightest-looking skin. As a result, European men and women often attempted to lighten their skin directly or used white powder on their skin to look more aristocratic. A variety of products were used, including white lead paint, which, as if the toxic lead was not bad enough, notoriously also contained arsenic. Queen Elizabeth I of England was one well-known user of white lead with which she created a look known as "the Mask of Youth." Portraits of the queen by Nicholas Hilliard from later in her reign are illustrative of her influential style.

Some native American tribes painted their faces for ceremonial events or battle.

## BRIEF TIMELINE OF COSMETICS<sup>[9-11]</sup>

Cosmetic deodorant was invented in 1888, by an unknown inventor from Philadelphia, and was trademarked under the name *Mumm*. During the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, makeup became fashionable in the United States of America and Europe owing to the influence of ballet and theatre stars. But the most influential new development of all was that of the movie industry in Hollywood. In 1900, black entrepreneur Annie Turnbo began selling hair treatments, including nondamaging hair straighteners, hair growers and hair conditioners door-to-door. In Los Angeles, Max Factor started selling makeup to movie stars in 1904 that did not cake or crack. Modern synthetic hair dye was invented in 1907 by Eugene Schueller, founder of *L'Oréal*. He also invented sunscreen in 1936. In 1914, T J Williams founded *Maybelline*, the specialized mascara manufacturing company. After the First World War, the flapper look came into fashion for the first time and with it came cosmetics: Dark eyes, red lipstick, red nail polish and the *suntan*, invented as a fashion statement by *Coco Chanel*. Previously, *suntans* had only been sported by agricultural workers while fashionable women kept their skins as pale as possible. In the wake of *Chanel's* adoption of the *suntan*, dozens of new fake tan products were produced to help both men and women achieve the "sun-kissed" look. In Asia, skin whitening continued to represent the ideal of beauty.

Lipstick was introduced in 1915 in cylindrical metal tubes. In 1922, the *bobby pin* was invented to manage short (*bobbed*) hair. In 1932, Charles and Joseph Revson, nail polish distributors, and Charles Lackman, a nail polish supplier, founded *Revlon*, which sells nail polish in a wide variety of colors. A new method for permanent waving, using chemicals, which did not require electricity or machines, was introduced in 1933. In 1935, *pan-cake* makeup, originally developed to look natural on color film, was created by Max Factor. Aerosols were patented in 1941, paving the way for hair spray. In 1944, a Miami Beach pharmacist, Benjamin Green, developed sunscreen to protect soldiers in the South Pacific. Lawrence Gelb, in 1950, introduced *Miss Clairol Hair Color Bath*, a one-step hair coloring product. *Roll-on* deodorant was launched in 1952 and mascara wands debuted in 1958, eliminating the need for applying mascara with a brush. In 1963, *Revlon* offered the first powdered blush-on. Aerosol deodorant was introduced in 1965.

## RISE OF THE INDIAN COSMETIC MARKET<sup>[12]</sup>

It is estimated that the Indian beauty market is worth more than US\$ 950 million (approx) and is rising at 20% a year, twice as fast as the US and Europe markets.

The segment that offers the highest competition is the cosmetic segment, which has multinational players such as *J. L. Morrison*, *Ponds*, *Unilever* and *Colgate-Palmolive*. The increasing demand in the cosmetic industry has led to many international brands, e.g. *Maybelline* and *Revlon*, *Avon* and *L'Oréal* have entered the Indian market.

The Indian cosmetics industry is passing through a very active phase in terms of product development and marketing. Indian consumers are moving away from the merely functional products to more advanced and specialized cosmetic items. Marketers have taken note of this change and are developing new marketing strategies to offer the Indian consumer the best. A cumulative positive impact has been rendered by the upbeat pace of the Indian economy, postliberalization, which has enhanced disposable income levels and aspirations among rural consumers, changing lifestyles in the booming middle class, as well as a fast growing base of youth with a high inclination to self-indulge. Pervasive media and rising westernization influences have awakened the consciousness of the Indian consumer to proactively seek health and beauty offerings to look and feel good.

The divergent mindsets and distinct consumer purchasing patterns in the rural and urban areas of India have prompted manufacturers to pursue focused strategies to cater individually to these distinct consumer segments. This is especially apparent in bar soaps, shampoos, toothpastes and lower-end skin care and color cosmetics. Urban areas, on the other hand, saw renewed consumer excitement through brand extensions, upgrading to family packs, exciting product formulations such as herbal ingredients, internationally proven scientific formulae and health-positioning initiatives deployed within mass toiletries. Premium cosmetics, salon hair care, fragrances, skin care and men's grooming saw emphasis on product differentiation, specialized features and rising brand awareness and visibility through media and enhanced distribution reach.

Growing media and westernization influence will stimulate awareness of personal hygiene as well as beauty consciousness, enhancing the adoption and frequency of usage of cosmetics and toiletries, especially among the rural users. Furthermore, the urban consumer base would increasingly upgrade to sophisticated mid-priced and premium products. The most dynamically growing product areas over the forecast period are expected to be color cosmetics, fragrances and sun care

due to their relative immaturity, although everyday use mass toiletries offerings will continue to rank in the highest sales numbers.

The first challenge that the color cosmetics industry has to face is to undo the negative connotations attached with "Being fashionable." Further, they also have to dispel the fears that color cosmetics are harmful for the skin. They need to help people learn to adopt cosmetics as an essential part of daily grooming.

In this industry, positioning is carried out mainly by advertisements. Lakme has always advertised in the various mass media available. It also has a very good distribution network. To position itself strongly among the 6 million youth section, Lakme came up with Elle18 in early 1996. It was advertised for the "Young girl who breaks the rules and loves to have fun." These ads showed young, college and high school going girls who projected the image of trying to be different and "cool."

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