

COSMETIC USE OF BHASMAS

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ABSTRACT

The beauty industry has undergone an explosive growth in the twentieth century. We are in an age where appearance matters not only to working people but also to a new born baby. We are in the era of selfies and that makes everyone more perspective towards the issues of facial skin. Ayurvedic science has played a pivotal role in the cosmetic industry. With the organic , natural and chemical free revolution , it has now become more necessary for Ayurvedic physicians to meet the growing demands of the beauty industry. Ayurvedic facials have now become a necessary service along with panchakarma procedures in an Ayurvedic clinic. With the various raw ingredients used in facials , bhasmas of various minerals can also play a crucial role in maintaining and addressing the issues facial skin. Ayurvedic bhasmas being in the size of nanoparticles can be easily absorbed into the skin to give a deeper effect unlike the herbal extracts or powders. As bhasmas undergo shodhan and maran they are completely safe even if absorbed by skin into the deeper tissues. Ayurveda can thus give world class results in treating facial skin with the topical use of bhasmas.

Keywords Ayurveda, cosmetics , Bhasmas .

INTRODUCTION

It is a proud moment for all ayurvedic professionals to note that entire cosmetics industry sells on the ‘herbal’ or ‘ayurvedic’ mark. With the growing awareness of chemical ingredients in the skin care products , people are opting for ayurvedic options for all kinds of skin problems. Face being the centre point of the same , there is a huge demand for new and effective face care ayurvedic products.

Herbal medicinal powders like Neem , Haridra have been largely in use for taking care of skin. The herbal extracts of these products have been greatly researched and included in many face care creams, lotions, soaps , shampoos etc. Ayurvedic texts also emphasise on the use of medicinal herbal powders by the method of **aalepa** (local application) in various diseases or for **varnya** (improving skin texture) purpose. There is an whole chapter dedicated by Charak acharya on medicines for external application in Aaragwadheeya adhyay of sutrasthan. Here there is mention of mostly plant origin products (1).

Ayurvedic medicines got revolutionised and Nagarjuna added more emphasis on mineral products in later years. They were found to be more potent to counter act the growing strength of doshas. The same mineral products or Bhasmas could also prove effective in cosmetic purpose along with the conventional herbal medicines. The added benefit being that all bhasmas are in nanoparticle size and can be easily absorbed through the skin. They can be the perfect choice to be added in face masks while doing ayurvedic facials.

DISCUSSION

Minerals are a major sector of cosmetic industry since long time. Many of the leading cosmetic products do include Abhrak (mica), Suvarna (gold), Mouktik (pearl) , Yashad (Zinc) etc. These minerals are not in bhasma form. Often the toxicity of externally used products is not taken seriously as compared to internal medications. There is hence a possibility of the drugs causing adverse effects on

long term exposure of the said minerals. In the recent past there were cases filed by consumers who suffered from toxicity of long term use of talc based powders. Minerals used in these companies were definitely unpurified. So, it became important that minerals used in skin care products should be very safe for health. It is well known that any external application of drugs does cause certain amount of penetration of these drugs into the body from skin. The concept goes parallel to the theory of 'Bhrajak pitta' in Ayurveda (2). Bhasmas of the minerals can be used which could provide health benefits along with skin protection and nourishment.

Advantages of using minerals in bhasma form

The bhasma form of minerals thus has advantages as compared to the raw form. By undergoing the process of 'shodhana' and 'maaran', bhasmas become totally safe for consumption (3). So, even if they are considered to get absorbed from the skin into the main blood stream, they would not cause any side effects to the human body. If used after proper assessment of dosha combination of the patient, they would definitely help restore the skin ailments at a faster rate. The bhasmas can cause direct effect at a particular area after getting absorbed through skin.

Most of the bhasmas are in the size of nanoparticles which are easy to get absorbed from the skin (4). Drugs thus absorbed will not get collected to the superficial layers of skin but will also reach the deeper muscle tissue to address skin ailments where multiple tissues are involved.

Use of single bhasmas

Abhrak Bhasma (Mica)

गोरितेजः परममृतवातपित्तक्षयम्
प्रज्ञाबोधिप्रशमितरुजंवृष्यमायुष्यमग्र्यम् ।
बल्यस्निग्धंरुचिदमकफंदीपनंशीतवीर्यम्
तत्तद्योगैः सकलगदहृद्योमसूतेन्द्रबन्धि । (र. र. समु. २/२)

Abhrak bhasma is compared to amrut to denote its importance as a medicine.

It pacifies all three doshas and hence can deal with all possible facial skin issues .

Vrushya on skin would mean that it can help in the formation of new skin tissue helping in rejuvenation. Ayushya is increase in longevity. On skin aspect the action can be understood as maintaining the elasticity of skin.

Abhrak is balya. So, wherever we need to increase the thickness of epidermal layer Abhrak bhasma can be applied.

Being Snighdha i.e. unctuous it can be used in vata dominating skin types.

Being sheet (cold) veerya it can very well have effect on the inflammations of skin (5).

Mica is supposed to be one of that ingredient which suits all skin types. Basically it is used in cosmetics as it reflects light and hence gives a smooth feathery look to the skin. It also fills up the fine lines and gives a wrinkle free look to the skin. Widely used in compact powders and eye shadows , Mica is the best organic choice for cosmetic industry in the present times (6).

Mouktik Bhasma (Pearl)

मौक्तिकंवृष्यमायुष्यंमधुरंशिशिरंपरं ।
दीपनंदाहशमननेत्रंवर्ण्यचकीर्तिम् ॥
जीर्णज्वरप्रशमनंत्वस्थिदन्तविवर्धनम् ।
हृद्यमेहरंमेधंदन्तोद्भेदज्वरापहम् ॥
मौक्तिकंसुशिशिरंक्षयापहंश्वासकासपरिकोपनाशनं ।
अस्थिशोषशमनंविषापहंदेहवीर्यबलबुधिवर्धनम् ॥ (रसतरं २३/७४)

Mouktik or pearl bhasma is mentioned to be vrushya and ayushya just like abhrak bhasma.

Mouktik is madhur in rasa. So, it will have jeevan (imparting longevity), balya (giving strength) properties. It will reduce vata and pitta by virtue of its rasa.

'Shishiram param' is something very specific for this bhasma. Being on the cooler side it will have a

protective effect on skin over wrinkles, inflammation, wounds, redness etc.

It is also directly mentioned to be effective against burning sensation. The same quality can be utilised to deal with issues like sunburn and tanning.

Not to forget that it is ‘vishapahaa’ which means it is a detoxifying agent. Very good quality in today’s era where skin products look out for ingredients to combat the effect of pollution and chemicals on skin (5).

Pearl is found in many of facial treatment products and its influence on skin texture is well known. Mostly used to lighten and brighten the skin, pearl powder also stands apart in reducing the problem of open facial pores. With the use of pearl powder skin looks tighter and radiant. Having calcium in abundant amount pearl powder provides moisture and helps in skin regeneration (7).

Yashada bhasma (zinc)

यशदंतुवरंतिक्तंशीतलंकफपित्तहृत् ।
चक्षुष्यंपरमंमेहान्पाण्डुश्वासंचनाशयेत् ॥ (आ.प्र.३/१८३)

Yashada bhasma is mentioned to have kashaya ras which means it has astringent property to close open pores and reduce oil on skin.

Being tikta in ras it will impart anti microbial and anti fungal property.

The coolness of Yashada helps to decrease burning sensation, inflammation and redness (5).

Another aspect of Yashada very much researched and used in cosmetic industry is its sunscreen effect. Chemical sunscreens absorb the UV rays of sun and thus protect skin from radiation while mineral sunscreens like yashada reflect the UV rays. Organic sunscreens are thus better and safer for skin. Yashada is found to be a broad spectrum sunscreen which blocks both UVA and UVB rays (8). Yashada bhasma can thus make its place in nearly all face products.

Shankha bhasma (Conch shell)

शंखक्षारोहिमोग्राहीग्रहणीरोगनाशनः ।
नेत्रपुष्पहरोवर्णस्तारुण्यपिटिकाप्रणुत् ॥ (आ. प्र. २/२६३)

Shankha or incinerated conch shell powder is a coolant and hence can be used in inflammation and redness. It is the only bhasma which is specifically mentioned to be acting against acne or pimples. It is also beneficial for skin (varnya)

Although Shankh bhasma is not included in many cosmetics in present time , it is a potential ingredient which can be used to fight against pimples.

Our skin is said to renew itself totally during a time span of 60 days. Aging is associated with thinning of the epidermis, elastosis, loss of melanocytes associated with an increased paleness of the skin and a decreased barrier function. As the differentiation of keratinocytes is strictly calcium dependent, calcium also plays an important role in the aging epidermis. Recently it has been shown that the epidermal calcium gradient in the skin that facilitates the proliferation of keratinocytes and enables their differentiation is lost in the process of skin ageing. Shankha bhasma could play an important role to keep these keratinocytes healthy.

CONCLUSION

The fast progressing world is moving back to the nature for all kinds of health needs. The cosmetic industry has almost been taken over by organic or ayurvedic products. It is in this time that ayurveda can put forth new concepts and new drugs to fulfil the health needs.

Bhasmas have a great potential to be used as a topical ingredient in various skin care products. Cosmetic industry has been using mineral products since long and there are various studies coming forward with the toxicity of the ingredients which are possibly absorbed from skin. Bhasma form of these minerals could make the same ingredients safe , rather more healthier. Without keeping the cosmetic use of

bhasmas limited only for big industries, these could be easily incorporated in various lepa given by Ayurvedic practitioners to take care of facial skin. Bhasmas can prove to be the most effective , organic and health supportive ingredients in topical face treatments.

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