

# IDENTIFICATION OF RUDRAKSHA

# 4

In Chapter 2, details have been given for of several types of rudraksha that are available from different sources. The main issue now is how to ascertain the genuineness of the bead and how to do the classification – Haridwar, Nepal, South India, Indonesia – as mentioned. As you will notice after going through this chapter, the whole issue of identifying genuine rudraksha is not so complicated yet as in the case of an Ayurvedic medicine or an agro-based product, it requires some expertise. There is no need for any expensive instrument or testing procedure for general checkup. However, some basic points need to be kept in mind while carrying out the tests.

Unfortunately, traditional sellers of rudraksha do not share the information on proper methods of identifying genuine beads for reasons best known to them. Most of the details given hereafter are known to these people. There are dozens of books on rudraksha, giving details of the mantras, prayers offered to Lord Shiva and stories glorifying rudraksha, but there is so far no book worth mentioning, which lists procedures that are to be adopted while identifying genuine rudraksha and making sure that one is procuring the right bead.

In spite of this, I must say that in certain typical cases some expertise is called for to ascertain the genuineness of

the bead. For example, rare beads like Trijuti and 14 or higher mukhi rudrakshas are often available as fakes and complications arise because of the higher levels of skill used by unscrupulous elements in creating the fake beads like joining a section inside the bead. In some cases, even the genuine bead may have inherent aberrations in structure.

There is no equipment developed so far, which can be readily used, to check the genuineness or otherwise of a rudraksha. And it is quite unlikely that such equipment will be invented as the product to be tested is a seed of a fruit with varied structures depending on the sources of its origin. The electro-magnetic power flow is so subtle that even after setting up some standards for flow of energy, it is not likely to give results due to variations in parameters.

It is, therefore, necessary to adopt an indirect route to check for fake beads so that the chances of getting a spurious one are minimized.

If we study the fake rudraksha market closely, we may find following percentage of fake varieties against each:

	Out of total fake beads
1. One mukhi	70%
2. Gaurishankar	10%
3. Higher than 7 mukhi and up to 21 mukhi	12%
4. Trijuti	2%
5. Mala beads 10 mm and below	3%
6. Others (2 mukhi Nepal, 1 mukhi Chandrakar, Sawar etc.)	5%

This assessment is based on our experience of this market, but there can be large variations. It is therefore noticed that if we can identify one mukhi and Gaurishankar properly in about 80% of the cases, we can save ourselves from getting a fake rudraksha.

### One mukhi rudraksha from Nepal

For all practical purposes, the one mukhi round variety rudraksha from Nepal is a rare bead. Almost all traders who have been in this business for several decades, are not confident of seeing a round variety of one mukhi rudraksha. Though, it finds mention in all the old texts, it has remained an enigma. Even the old collections from ashrams and sadhus or princely families do not seem to have such a rudraksha. If we go by the old shastras, then one mukhi Nepal variety remains as one of the biggest mysteries of our times.

There are several assumptions, myths and stories relating to the Nepal one mukhi rudraksha, some of which are:

that only one tree bears this seed once in five or ten years (some say even each year).

out of three seeds are created every year in one specific tree, one seed vanishes inside earth after falling, another goes to the King of Nepal, while the third is distributed randomly by hiding it inside prasad (of round laddoo sweets) on Mahashivaratri day, when lakhs of people assemble at the temple premises and the luckiest one gets it. (As there is no king now in Nepal, the saying is not relevant)

trading of one mukhi rudraksha is banned in Nepal and any one found selling it can be imprisoned.

Former Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi or other

important politicians or some influential people had one mukhi rudraksha

it automatically comes on to the top if immersed in a bag containing rice overnight. If it is kept below Bel Patra leaves overnight, it comes on the top of the leaves.

it has miraculous powers and makes the owner rich and famous.

it is the cause of fame and prosperity for several film stars and business tycoons.

Let us evaluate some of the possibilities while studying a one mukhi rudraksha in terms of references in the epics:

### First possibility

There are cases where all the lines in a rudraksha do not naturally get completed from one end to other and only one line remains open and clear. Many people accept such a rudraksha as a one mukhi. Such a judgment is disputable and it is a matter of conviction to assume this bead as one mukhi. This happens more often in a four mukhi rudraksha and some times in five mukhi rudrakshas. A genuine rudraksha is devoid of any tampering and each bead must have a natural hole. If such a bead is cut horizontally, it shall show 5, 4 or 3 compartments depending on the mukhis it possesses. Therefore, scientifically such a bead cannot be a one mukhi; however the rarity of round one mukhi rudraksha compels people to settle for any available alternative.

In some two mukhi Nepal variety rudraksha, the second line either does not get completed fully or it is mechanically suppressed (by putting a vice over the fruit mouth on the tree itself before it ripens). Such a bead is also accepted as one

mukhi by many. The shape of such beads is not round as that of a genuine one mukhi. A genuine one mukhi rudraksha is one on which there is no tampering and there is only one clear line.

### Second possibility

Rudraksha mentioned in ancient scriptures may be from regions other than Nepal. For example, the one mukhi bead from Indonesia. There are several rudraksha species and beads from these trees must have come to the notice of our wise saints. We now know that one mukhi from Indonesia is a genuine bead in this category. Though rare, these are available.

### Third possibility

It is quite likely that the trees must have stopped producing this variety because of environmental changes resulting from pollution and the felling of old and rare trees. As the quantity of such beads is low, beads from the past are not visible now. The rudraksha kept at the Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu appears as one among the rarest of beads. It has been noticed that even Indonesian one mukhi is not produced on a regular basis every year. It is also possible that nature has some unknown cycle or method to produce these rare beads. It might be interesting to note that as per one supplier of one mukhi of underdeveloped variety these are produced on a single tree in Nepal. This specific tree produces 1 and 2 mukhi or without any mukh only in round variety. These are accepted only on the basis of faith.

### Fourth possibility

The Sawar is two beads naturally joined into one. Similarly,

a Gaurishankar has two beads, one of which is essentially a one mukhi. This one mukhi bead is considered as a genuine one mukhi bead by some and they prefer to cut it out from the whole and wear it separately. Usually, there will be a hole in this bead and the shape is half moon. In many instances, the Sawar is used directly as a one mukhi bead without cutting the one mukhi from the twin bead.

As regards one mukhi rudraksha of Nepal, the following points must be borne in mind:

1. The bead shall be very expensive even if it is a Sawar.
2. Its shape may not be round but similar to two mukhi Rudraksha but in smaller size.
3. There will be a natural hole in the bead.
4. One mukhi rudraksha in the shape of half moon (also known as Chandramukhi or Ardhchandrakar or simply Chandrakar) is actually a substitute of the original and it can be procured on the basis of one's faith. The bead is from the species of *Elaeocarpus Tuberculatus* grown in South India and Sri Lanka, as already mentioned earlier.

In many instances, a rudraksha offered by a known saint, guru or any influential source gives excessive confidence to the recipient (because of the faith) and it is often impossible to convince him or her that the bead could be a fake one.

However, if some religious institutions are selling fake one mukhi rudrakshas (Nepal variety) for material gains, it is unethical and despicable.

### Indonesian one mukhi

A genuine one mukhi rudraksha from Indonesia can be obtained if one has the right source. It is a small bead (max.

12 mm long and upto 6 mm in central width) having an oblong shape (Fig. 6). It resembles the two mukhi of Indonesia but the exception is that the one line is complete on one side and on the other side it partially exists as the closing loop of the bead. In two mukhi rudraksha, both the lines clearly exist.

Indonesian beads of all mukhs have been dissected and noticed that the number of inner clefts equal the number of mukhs outside. One mukhi rudraksha has one cleft inside, while a two mukhi rudraksha has two clefts and so on. In the case of Chandrakar one mukhi, it has one wide opening (not a hole). Such is the case with two or three mukhi Chandrakar too. Even Haridwar two, three and four mukhi rudrakshas have only one opening inside (Fig. 10). This is a valid test to verify the mukhs in a rudraksha and it is fully relevant for Nepal or Indonesian beads, which also follow other characteristics as given in our ancient epics.

Indonesian one mukhi rudraksha, if available, is the best choice as on date for those aspiring to get one mukhi genuine rudraksha.

### One mukhi rudraksha from other areas

Sometimes, we come across nearly round rudraksha-like seeds having sharp protrusions and thorns. And many a times, these beads would be having one mukh. However, these could be light in weight and would not be having a natural hole. Such beads are not accepted as rudraksha.

It is common on the streets of pilgrim centres and in large shops in places like Rishikesh, Haridwar and Banaras to see fake one mukhi rudrakshas openly being sold using marketing gimmicks. In several shops in Rishikesh, it is common to see

such fake beads to be reverentially kept on a red cloth with a rich spread of vermilion. The salesmen will tell you that the sacred rudraksha will not be shown until morning, which will usually convince a naïve person of the genuineness of the bead. In most cases, such beads could be made from two or three mukhi Hardwar/Dehradun variety by removing one or two lines using some sharp tools. A large number of fake one mukhi rudrakshas is also made from five mukhi Nepal beads by removing four lines. (Fig. 37)

An artisan creating a fake one mukhi rudraksha will do the work only on such beads on which the lines are not deep, thus retaining the round shape even after removing four of the five lines. Such rudraksha beads are available from Assam area. One of the gimmicks is to stick the pieces on the bead over the lines so that a gullible person will not be able to look at the lines closely.

There are also people working on Sheesham or some other wood to carve rudraksha-shaped beads depicting trishul, snake, Om or Shivling and with one line with a deep groove. It is learnt that there are full-fledged workshops where such spurious beads are produced.

Bhadraksha beads found in Uttar Pradesh and Western Bihar areas of India are often used to make fake one mukhi rudraksha beads. Bhadraksha is a flat bead having texture and grooves resembling rudraksha but it can be easily identifiable. Mostly, bhadrakshas have two faces (3 mukhi bhadraksha is also found) and these are used to make one mukhi rudraksha by removing the line on one side and carving forms of a Shivaling/yoni or snake on the other.

One mukhi Chandrakar (half moon) variety of rudraksha has

become popular in the last 15 to 20 years as a substitute to one mukhi rudraksha. It belongs to the *Elaeocarpus tuberculatus* species.

One mukhi Chandrakar is often considered as an alternative to one mukhi round Nepal variety. However, it is a matter of faith as it cannot be having the properties – like the natural hole, texture, density and shape of the original one mukhi rudraksha. In terms of internal structure, it has just one wide compartment. Even the two, three or four mukhi Chandrakars too have only one compartment inside which is contrary to the accepted norm of recognizing the mukh in a typical rudraksha. For wearing, it is clamped using a specially designed cage and hole is never drilled.

This chandrakar is, therefore, not a rudraksha, as per the definition given in our great ethics.

It is found that there is lot of publicity for one mukhi Chandrakar variety on TV channels. There is an exaggeration of the properties of this variety. All the claimed benefits are of the one mukhi rudraksha of Nepalese or Indonesian variety only and users must bear in mind that the half moon-shaped bead cannot match the characteristics of the genuine one mukhi rudraksha. These days most chandrakar variety is also being made manually by injection moulding and if some people are to be believed, some beads manufactured are coming from China?

Some fake rudrakshas are made from ordinary wood, betel nuts or seeds of wild berries with the figures of Shivling, snakes, moon, or Om, however, this practice is followed to make fake round one mukhi variety of Nepal.

### Gaurishankar

Gaurashankar is one of the rudraksha varieties whose fakes are available in large numbers. It is estimated that about 10% of the entire fake rudraksha market consists of this variety. Usually two beads (five or six mukhi) are taken and cut flat on the edges and these are then glued together using superior adhesives so that the joined pieces do not come off even when these are treated with boiling water. Even ordinary wood is used to carve the rudraksha. In some cases, the individual pieces are joined in sections to outsmart the experts. An effective examination of a Gaurishankar is as follows:

1. The beads should not join close to each other in a flat way and the joint should emanate from inside the bead and not merely peripherally.
2. Use the boiling test as under:

Boil the bead in water for about two hours. If it is a fake one joined together using common adhesives, the beads will come off. Even when quality adhesives are used, there will be discoloration at the joints indicating different colour at the joint than the beads. If it is a genuine Gaurishankar, the colour will be uniform throughout. This test is also useful in identifying fake beads of higher mukhis like Trijuti.

When a Gaurishankar rudraksha is cut horizontally, it will give the impression of a defined single bead with twin-space arrangement of beads. This may be seen in Fig. 9.

Sometimes, makers of fake Gaurishankar rudrakshas use sectional insertions so intricately that the lines are matched precisely and only sharp critical eyes can make

out the joint. However, when the beads are boiled in water, there will be discoloration at these insertions.

### Fake rudrakshas of higher mukhis

Rudrakshas of eight mukhis and above are often made out of lower mukhi beads. The most common method is to carve additional lines. For example, a 13 mukhi rudraksha can be easily made from an 11 mukhi rudraksha, a 14 mukhi rudraksha from 12 mukhi rudraksha and so on. This gives higher margin for the seller. For example, a 10 mukhi rudraksha may sell for Rs1,500, but if two additional lines are created to make it a 12 mukhi rudraksha, it can easily fetch him Rs 3,000. The profit is often distributed among the artisans, the trader and the retailer. If only one additional line is carved, the margin could be around Rs 800. Again, it depends on the mukhs. For example, if a 14 mukhi rudraksha is made from a 13 mukhi rudraksha by adding one line, the effort can get as much as Rs 5,000 per bead. It will require very close and expert examination to identify the additional line as the line tends to look nearly same as natural lines.

Often the additional line is made after heating the tool, which will normally be very sharp so that a clear line is created without any blurring. However, hot tool darkens the line.

The artisans, who create fake beads, are experts in their own way. It is for them to decide where to create the additional lines to avoid suspicion. Usually, the additional lines are created at the end of the longitudinal portion as there is more availability of space here. The artisan has also to be careful so that the lines do not look straight as created by a sharp instrument and they have to be serrated and the depth of the lines should match that of original lines.

It is unfortunate that unscrupulous elements are using this divine bead to exploit the gullibility of people. Even educated people are fooled by these elements, who pass on spurious seeds like betel nuts and berries as genuine rudrakshas. People should take extreme care and look for any minute differences in the size, shape and depth of the lines and reject such beads outright.

How to identify the created lines through a scientific procedure?

One way is to follow the X-ray technique (Fig. 13) whereby one can see the internal structure without damaging the beads. This test can work without much complication for rudrakshas up to nine mukhis but for higher mukhi beads, it may not give 100% accurate results due to the overlapping of the internal seeds. This technique needs to be further refined and developed as this is the only non-destructive procedure to verify the number of mukhis. For 10 mukhis and above, taking X-rays from different angles may help to count the inner seeds. CT scanning is the other way to help, but it is more expensive.

Another procedure, which is under development, is to create a standard of magneto frequency for five mukhi rudrakshas and then from the extent of frequency one can fix up the number of lines. However, the source and type of varieties, variation in the size of the beads and quality of the inner seeds are factors which can severely influence the results while using such a method. Infra-red reflection and other methods are being evaluable to identify the created lines.

In the absence of any direct scientific method as of now it

is advisable to follow the simple procedures given above for checking the originality of the beads. In simple words following can be said about checking:

1. A good and perfectly matured rudraksha should sink in water but this does not mean that all rudrakshas that do not sink in water are fake. Minute check for the lines or the joints before coming to a conclusion is required.

A genuine rudraksha can also float in water if there is a hole in it and when air is trapped or if the bead has got dehydrated due to aging. There are some varieties of genuine rudraksha whose density is not enough to make it sink or which have been plucked from tree before maturity.

Therefore, this test has limitations and should not lead to your final word but it can ensure that the seed was fully ripe and it belonged to a heavy variety.

2. Rotating the bead between two copper coins is also not a correct procedure as any bead having surface like that of rudraksha and having grooves and ups and downs can rotate in this condition.
3. Other tests like seeing whether the milk in which a bead is immersed does not ferment or the bead comes to the top automatically when kept in bag full of grains are not correct.
4. Proper examination of the bead with one's own eye is the best method available for which one does not have to be an expert. Do not buy a round one mukhi, even if it is available covered with a skin or with leaves or accept it if given free. Do not buy a Gaurishankar having flat end-to-end joint. The groove in a

Gaurishankar should join from inside as depicted in several figures shown. Higher mukhi beads (8 mukhi and above) should be examined carefully for additional artificially-created lines. Lines should be on mountains and not on ridges with certain exceptions.

5. In case of doubt, a destructive test by cutting the seed horizontally and counting the seeds inside will offer a conclusive proof. The number of seeds should be equal to the number of lines. Here again, it is absolutely necessary to understand that if the seed inside is not fully developed, then you shall see only a point or even an empty compartment instead of a seed. Normally, the inner seed is located just opposite the line. In some cases the inner seed is too large resulting from fusion of two seeds. This type of test can be useful for seeds up to 10 mukhis. Beads of higher mukhis should be examined and tested using special skills and counterchecking using CT scan techniques.

Some of the non-destructive tests like X-ray or CT scan can be indicative but the methods are not perfected as of now and hence cannot be accepted as foolproof. These tests can be done correctly for beads up to eight mukhis but beyond that it may require patience and skill to count the internal seeds or additional checking using detailed visual inspection. One needs to engage an expert for this purpose, whose visual check might be correct.

6. Boiling in water for a minimum of two hours shall bring out whether the bead is created using an artificial joint. A perfect bead should remain uniform in color

even after the boiling process.

7. Always follow the guidelines to procure perfect beads, which are not damaged, have hard body, have thorny yet smooth surface and have natural hole (for highest quality beads). The color of the bead may be any, but it should be uniform throughout.
8. Predominant etching of Om, Shivaling or Trishul should indicate that it is spurious although in some genuine beads such etching occurs, but in a very natural and merging manner.