

ORNAMENTS, THEIR MATERIALS, AND THE PURPOSE THEY POSSESS—THE KUSHAN AND THE GUPTA PERIOD.**Priyanka Sahani**

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Abstract

Both archaeological and literary sources reflect that humans have adorned various ornaments since ancient times. Men, women, and children wore these ornaments on their necks, wrists, ankles, and other body parts. Ornaments signified a symbol of beauty and prosperity. The social status of men and women was also reflected by the ornaments.

This study investigates the kind of materials used in making such ornaments and their different styles. It is relevant to know the material, as material reflects the prosperity of society. Superstitions and rituals are also associated with the use of ornaments. The beauty symbol served various purposes as we investigated and reflected on relevant information about the ideologies prevalent in society.

In effect, the study is intended to provide a detailed analysis of ornaments of this vital period of the Indian subcontinent and the values that our society possesses till the present day.

Introduction

Human beings have always been in love with ornaments. The jewellers, with the power of their imagination, have been providing variety and beauty to the ornaments. Ornaments have been regarded as a symbol of a person's attachment to the material world, their association with beauty, and compliance with the requirements of Indian religious beliefs. It is difficult to identify all the ornaments mentioned in the ancient literature. Men and women wore ornaments of various kinds made of different materials. The earliest evidence of the practice of wearing ornaments is available in the Indus Valley Civilization. A perusal of the art of making ornaments of this period makes us infer that long before this civilization, the tradition of wearing ornaments had started. Most of the ornaments were made of gold or silver, which were inlaid with precious and semi-precious jewels and beads or pieces of stone. From Vedic literature, we know the names of ornaments worn by people in that period. There is also information about the shape of the ornaments and their wearer. Ornaments such as Ataka and Kurira were headpieces worn by both men and women; Pratisara was worn by a soldier, Sipra, a headpiece, was worn by men, and Opasta was worn by women. Neck ornaments such as Niska, Hiranaya Urvasi, and Rukma were generally made of gold and worn by both men and women. The practice of wearing a sacred thread has come in later Vedic times. The earliest reference of this practice is met with in the Taittiriya Samhita. There is little evidence about ornaments in the Upanishads and the Sutras; the words mentioned for head ornaments are Jala, Kumba, Opasa, Kurira, Sraga, Mauli, etc. Jala was an ornament worn by women. Jalam also means armor or helmet. The Mahakavyas mention chudamani, kundela, hemala, muktahara, kanthasutra, mekhala, keyura, angda, valya, angavaliyaka, and nupura as the most important ornaments in that period. The materials used were gold, silver, pearls, diamonds, brass, small

shells, iron, etc. People in the sixth century BCE were fond of wearing ornaments. The Buddhist literature names many ornaments, such as Mala, Chudamani, Mekhala, etc are mentioned. Gold, silver, diamonds, pearls, ivory, etc., were used in making ornaments. The art of making ornaments was fully developed in this period. The most important ornaments of the Maurya period were Kundala(earring), heavy Graiveyaka (ornaments of the neck), flat triangular garland on the chest, Kataka (a ring) for the forearm, and Angada (armlet). These were made of gold and silver.

List of metals and non-metals used in making ornaments of the Kushan and Gupta periods.

In the Kushan and Gupta periods, we can analyze various materials from which the ornaments were made. To begin with, *Gold* was the prominent material used in making ornaments, along with its wide use in making gold coins for monetary purposes. In India, the earliest reference to the use of gold for making ornaments is available from the Harappan civilization, where gold ornaments were discovered in the excavations. Gold is a precious, lustrous, yellow, and beautiful metal. The words used for gold in the Kushana and Gupta periods were Svarva Kanehana, Hiranya, hema Kanakat, etc. In the Amarkosha, we have a list of eighteen synonyms for gold:

- 1.Kanokam 2. Hiranyam 3. Hema 4. Najakom 5. Japaniyam 6. Gangeyam 7. Bhama
8. Kurvaram 9. Kurvaram 10. Chamirakam 11. Jatarupam 12. Maharajatam 13. Kanchanama 14. Rukman 15. Karthasvaram 16. Jambunadam 17. Astapadah
- 18.Suvarnam¹

Ashvaghosa considers gold to be the purest and the best of all metals. In the Mahavastu, gold ornaments are called kilanjaka, vethaka, karanda, mukhaphullaka, bimbpa, pariharyaka, sroni, bhandika, etc. According to Yuan Chwang², the business magnates wore finger-rings made of gold. From the contemporary literature, we know that kings, emperors, and the rich used gold utensils for eating food. Chairs, seats, and bedsteads were also made of gold, or they were gold-plated. Pitchers, pestles and yokes, pillars, and coins were also made of gold. There is a reference in the Kumarasambhava from which we know that seven sages (saptarsi) had worn gold garments; we cannot describe the form of these garments. The upper parts of cows are plated with gold and also put in their necks.

Kautilya has mentioned five varieties of gold and has also specified their colours. These were the following²:

- Jambunada (Its colour was similar to that of the fruit of rose-apple (black-plum): It was excavated in the Meru mountain region.
- Satakumbha (Its colour resembled the colour of the pollen of the lotus flower.) It was excavated in the Satakumbha mountain region.
- Haraka (This colour resembled the colour of the Sevati flower: It was excavated from gold mines.
- Vainava: Its colour resembled the colour of the karnikara flower, and it was excavated from the Venu Mountain region.
- Srigi Sakaija: Its colour resembled the colour of mensil. It was excavated in the Svarnabhumi region.

Kautilya has divided gold into three categories: (naturally pure), Rusesiddha (purified by chemicals), and Akarodgata (impure gold excavated from mines). The Sanakumbha variety was considered the best, the red-yellow coloured, the next best, and red coloured the worst.

Silver: Silver is a lustrous and white metal that can be moulded into many forms after melting. It is difficult to determine when the metal has been used for making ornaments. We come across many references to this metal in literature. The earliest archaeological evidence comes from Taksasila, where silver ornaments and utensils have been discovered. These ornaments and utensils seem to have been made in the tradition of Greek culture. These are regarded as having been made in the 1st century CE⁴. No utensils made in the Kushana or the Gupta periods have been discovered, but from the contemporary literature, we know that silver was used in this period. In the Jain literature, we know that silver was used in this period. In the Jain literature, silver is included in the category of precious gems and jewels. Middle-class people used silver for making ornaments. Just as people gave gold in charity, so they did silver. Besides the word Rajara, the word rupya was also used for silver. The Amarakosa gives five synonyms of rajara, namely (1) duvarnam, (2) rajatam, (3) rupyam, (4) kharjuram, and (5) Svetam⁵. From the Amarakosa we know that besides ornaments and coins, looking glasses and jars, etc., were also made of silver. From the literature of the Kushana and the Gupta periods, we get no information about the varieties of silver. But Kautilya⁶ mentions four varieties of silver, namely:

- (1) Tutthodgata (Its colour resembled the colour of a jasmine flower.) It was excavated from the region of Tuttha mountain.
- (2) Gaudika (Its colour resembled the flower of tagara; it was found in Assam).
- (3) Kambuka: Its colour also resembled the flower of tagara. It was excavated in the region of Kambu Mountain.
- (4) Chakravalaika: Its colour resembled the colour of the kunda flower. It was excavated from Chakravala mines, white, smooth, and soft silver was considered the best, while black, coarse silver with cracks was regarded as the worst. Clear, lustrous silver with bubbles and resembling the colour of curd was considered pure.

Pearl: Pearl has been used for making ornaments since very ancient times in India. The pearls were considered more useful for making neck ornaments than for other ornaments. From a perusal of sculptures of the Kushana and the Gupta periods, it can be stated that the common practice was to thread the pearls in a thread or wire and wear it as a neck ornament. A garland made of good-quality pearls was called Tarahara in the Gupta period⁷. Pearls were also used to decorate furniture, such as a wooden seat, umbrella, or the handle of a sword⁸. A pearl was also known as a sukta and muktaphala, etc. The necks of elephants were also decorated with garlands of pearls. The pearl is regarded as having originated from a mountain rock. In the Mudraraksasa, a pearl is called Subhra Muktamani (shining pearl gem)⁹, and in the Kadambari, it is referred to as a lustrous pearl¹⁰. The jewellers used to rub a pearl on a whetstone to thread it with a stick. The drill used for piercing a hole in a pearl was called Asphotani or Vaidhanika¹¹. Pearls and other gems were stored in a storehouse. The pearl, which was big, round, without a base, lustrous, white, weighty, smooth, and pierced at the proper place, was considered of a good variety. Kautilya has mentioned the origin of the pearls in ten regions, such as Tamrapani. He also mentions 13 varieties of defective pearls¹²:

1. Masuraka resembled a grain of lentil.

2. Tripusaka (Triangular).
3. Kūrmaka (Resembling a tortoise in shape).
4. Ardachandrka (resembling a crescent in shape).
5. Kanchukita (with a thick cover).
6. Yamaka (joined with another pearl).
7. Kartaka (broken).
8. Kharaka (coarse).
9. Sikthaka (spotted).
10. Kamandaluka (resembling a begging bowl in shape).
11. Syava (of brown colour).
12. Nila (of blue colour).
13. Duroiddha (not pierced at the proper place).

Suryakanta: The gem suryakanta has been mentioned with other precious gems in the Jain literature¹³. According to Ahsvaghosha, the gem produced fire of fuel, and the sun rays were brought together through this gem. It is not possible to identify such a gem in modern times. Scientifically, the existence of such a gem is not an impossibility because a curved gem is placed in front of the Sun at a particular angle, and fire can be produced. Kautilya has called this gem a kind of crystal gem (sphatika)¹⁴. It is possible that this gem was prepared by having curves in various ways.

Coral: It is a red-coloured precious substance built on the sea bed by small creatures that are worn by people these days to free themselves from the evil effects of the planet Mars (Mangala). In the Jain literature, this precious substance is called paravala¹⁵. In the Amarakosha, it is also called vidruma. In the literary works of the Kushana and the Gupta periods, the gem is said to be red. Besides making ornaments, the substance was also used for making pillars, etc. Kautilya has given a vivid description of this precious substance¹⁶.

Sphatika (pebble, crystal gem): Sphatika was also regarded as a precious gem. Another synonym of sphatika was Billaura¹⁷. It is a white-coloured transparent gem. It was used for making ornaments, staircases, begging bowls, decorating buildings, etc. Kautilya has mentioned four varieties of this gem.

Vaidurya: It was also a precious gem. In the Sasa Jataka, its colour is said to be blue, and in the Pratima nataka, its colour is said to be dark (Syama)¹⁸. Besides its use in making ornaments, it was also useful in making feet of a bedstead.

Marakata (emerald): It was also a precious gem. Its colour is said to be green. The Amarakosha gives three other synonyms of marakata, namely maratmatam, ashvagarbhah, and harinmanih¹⁹. Bana has also referred to this gem in many places.

Panna (emerald): It is mentioned by Bana²⁰. Its colour is green. It is the same as marakata.

Nilama (sapphire): This precious gem has been called indranila, mahanila, nilamani²¹, etc. It was bluish in colour and smooth. It was used for making ornaments and decorative pieces used to decorate a room.

Diamond: In the Amarakosha it is called ratna (precious stone) and mani(gem). It was considered as precious as a ruby or pearl. Kalidasa calls it dhaulatratna.

Ivory: In the Jain literature, ivory is regarded as a precious substance. Pulindas, who were aboriginals, used to collect ivory. Ivory was used for making idols. Garlands were also made

of ivory. Some people wore pieces of ivory shaped like leaves in their ears. It might be used for making other ornaments.

Manika (Ruby): Bana has mentioned this gem. It is red in colour.

Budabada: This gem is mentioned in the Kadambari²².

Sindura: Banabhatta also mentioned this gem²², probably of vermillion colour

Taranga: It is difficult to identify this gem mentioned in the Kadambari²³ as we have no description either of its colour or shape.

Garuda: It is mentioned along with marakata, padmaraga, indranila, Mahanila, and pusparaga gems in the Harshacharita and was one of the royal gems.

Chatulatilaka: According to Bana²³, this gem was hanging on the forehead, passing through the parting and braiding the locks of hair. As the name indicates, the gem might have swung on the forehead. For this reason, it was probably called chatulatilaka.

Pusparaga: Bana has mentioned this gem. This gem may probably be identified with the pukharaja (topaz) of modern times.

Padmaraga: This gem was also used for making ornaments. According to Kautilya, it resembled a variety of lotus called Padma²⁴.

Sankha (conch shell): There were many ornaments made of conch shells; probably people with limited economic means used these ornaments. It is also possible that even the rich might have worn ornaments made of conch shells for a change.

Rudraksha (the seeds of the tree *Eleocarpus genitrus*): The ornaments made of rudraksha are mentioned in connection with ascetics or people performing rituals.

Bones: The ornaments made of pieces of bones must have been used by poor people. We come across only a few references to ornaments made of bones in the literary sources. Kalidasa mentions a garland of bones in the neck of Shankara²⁵. In the Shaiva sect we come across the tradition of wearing ornaments made of bones.

Glass: Bana has mentioned glass in the Kadambari²⁶. The ornaments made of glass were very popular with the poor people.

Lac (shellac): Ornaments made of lac must also have been worn by poor people²⁷.

Cowries (small shells): The poor people used ornaments made of cowries²⁸.

Small beads: Just as at present, the ornaments made of beads were popular even in ancient times²⁹. The excavations at the Harappan sites have shown that beads were used by the Indus Valley people even in prehistoric times.

Iron: Probably the people with limited economic means must have used ornaments made of iron. People might have worn iron ornaments to protect themselves from various misfortunes. From Bana we know that an ascetic named Saivacharya wore a conch shell threaded in an iron ring³⁰.

Munja (a kind of long reed): It is considered sacred even today. For this reason, it was worn either as a finger ring (pavitra) or as a girdle around the waist. Probably for this reason it might have been used for making ornaments even in the Gupta period³¹.

Flower Ornaments: Flower ornaments have been very popular in Indian society. Kings and the poor, and men and women, all were equally fond of wearing flower ornaments. Probably flower ornaments must have been so popular because they could be worn always in new designs and ways.

Varieties of ornaments worn by people in the Kushana period.

Head ornaments:

Head plates—they seemed to be made of metal. These plates not only kept the turbans in the proper position but must also have served as head ornaments. For this reason, the caps have been adorned by embroidery work. Both men and women wore head ornaments of different styles. On the turbans of the two images of Balarama and the male image in the Mathura Museum, the metal plates of each of these images are three crests, which can be called Trihikha. Sometimes men made their hair in the form the Indian religious mendicants make a bun-shaped hairdo and wrapped a garland around it. This garland seems to have beads on it. Such head ornaments can be seen in the Mathura and the Lucknow museums in the images of Maitreya, Siddhartha, Bodhisattvas, and two other male images.

In one of the women's images of the Mathura Museum, we see chains of pearls in the hair on the backside, and on the left on the backside, there is an adorned metal plate.

Ear ornaments:

The ear ornaments of the Kushana period are of two kinds:

1. Ornaments that were worn on the lobes of the ears like the modern tops.
2. Ear ornaments hanging below the lobes of the ear like a kundela (earring) or jhumka (pendant).

Both types were worn by men and women of the Kushana period. Such as the ear image of Kubera in the Mathura Museum is shown coming down even below the shoulders. The ear image of the images of a Bodhisattva in the museum resembles a bell, and it comes down to the shoulders. On the lobes of ears, there is a circular thing like the modern tops, which resembles a Suchakra kundala, as mentioned in the Vedic literature. Other types of kundala were Makara kundala mentioned in Kadambari, patra kundala mentioned in Padataditkam, and so on. Some ear ornaments are without any design and are thin and long. Such ear ornaments are worn by both men and women. These ornaments may be identified with kannasya khilaka (nail of the ears) mentioned in the Angavijja.

There are instances when an ear ornament was worn only in one ear, and at other times two ear ornaments of different designs were worn in the two ears. Such as in the three images of Balarama and one image of Ardhanarishevara of the Mathura Museum. There is also an image of a woman in the Mathura Museum who has two ear ornaments in each of her ears. Two ear ornaments of two different designs carved in two ears of the same image of the Kushana period show variety as well as the originality of the sculpture.

Neck ornaments: There are different types of neck ornaments seen in the images available of the Kushan period at Mathura and the Lucknow Museum. They are as follows³²:

- Simple neck ornaments with no engravings or any gems studded on them.
- Neck ornaments that were made by threading pearls or beads in a piece of thread or wire, such as ekavatis and haravalis.
- Neck ornaments in which gems are studded on a metal plate.
- Neck ornaments that were wide and had carving on them, sometimes studded with gems. Similar to this were long neckpieces called yoktra, worn by women in Buddhacharita.
- Neck ornaments resembling ends with crocodiles. The complete necklace seems to have been made by affixing pearls or some other gems.

- Neck ornament with a long chain attached to a locket. This neck ornament is longer than the other ornaments. Such ornaments can be seen in the images of Bodhisattvas in the Mathura Museum. Another long ornament called vanamala is carved on the images of Vishnu and Krishna, two images of Balarama, and also of the Indra image.
- Neck ornament shaped like Hamsuli (semi-circular) of the present day. It fitted closely to the neck and was quite thick.
- Neck ornaments with four chains decorated with pearls
- Very thick neck ornaments with two chains are shown in the image of a woman in the Mathura Museum. This ornament is spread on both the shoulders.
- Very thick neck ornament spread up to the shoulders. It is tied in the center where a circular locket is also depicted. This neck ornament is carved only in the neck of male images.

Neck ornaments such as Suvarna sutra (a thin gold chain), Kanthasutra, and Ardhamahara (a necklace of twelve chains) are also mentioned in the literary works of the Kushana period. Another neck ornament called Yajnopavita (a sacred thread) must have been made with thread. Rakshasutra is a sacramental thread tied by the sisters on the wrist of their brother. This tradition probably began in the Kushan period. A rakshasutra is seen on the image of the future Bodhisattava Maitreya.

Bhujabanda (armlet):

There were a variety of armlets, such as Pariheranga, simple circular armlets having one, two, three, four, or five lines, mentioned in Angavijja; Talabha, an armlet of rectangular shape formed by horizontal and vertical lines with floral designs. The most common term used for armlet is Keyura found in Buddhacharita, Saundarananda, etc. Another kind of armlet was known as Angada, an armlet worn and not tied.

Kankana (bracelet):

The ornaments of the wrist, in general terms, were called Kankana. There were plain kankanas, decorated and attractive kankanas, coiled kankanas, Kankanas inlaid with gems. In Bhojpur they are called Mathas. Plain Kankana was worn by both males and females. In the Buddhacharita, the gold Kankanas worn by women were called Bhujapasha. Other names of Kankanas were Kataka, Valaya, etc.

Mudrika (finger ring):

Finger rings were studded with a variety of gems. Such finger rings can be seen in the image of the Shalabhajika of the Mathura Museum on the kanisha (little finger) of the left and Tarajani (forefinger). The Mudrika was also known as Angulibhushana, angulimudra, angulimudrika, etc. Besides being ornaments of finger, they were also used as a seal. To distinguish finger rings from the seal, they were called angulimudrika and anguli-mudra.

Mekhala (girdle):

This ornament was worn by women. The most common design of Mekhala was the snake. These were also known as Katak, Suvarnasutra, Kinkini, Rashana, Kanchi, etc. These girdles were made with metals such as gold and attached with small jingling bells studded with precious stones that produced sweet sounds when women walked. There are references to

HemaMekhala, Manimekhala (copper girdle) in the Sukhavati, the Mahavashtu, the Maitrakanyakavadana, and the Divyavadana. They also had small jingling bells that produced sweet sounds.

Feet Ornaments:

These ornaments can be seen more in the images of women than in those of men. Manjirapadabhushana resembled a ten- to twelve-coiled bracelet of feet and was generally thick. They were also called Padavalaya in each foot, resting near the heels. These feet ornaments were ornamented with gems as well. Some men also adorned padavalayas.

Ornaments of the Gupta period.

Head Ornaments:

Unlike the Kushana period, the ornaments of the Gupta period were limited. Ushnisa (turban) was decorated by pinning a semi-circular and ornamented metal plate in front in this period, as was the custom in the Kushana period. Another head ornament known as *kiriṭa* (crown) has been associated with many gods such as Vishnu, Kubera, the Sun, etc³³. For this reason, all these gods were known as *kiriṭi* (those who wore a *kiriṭa*). As in the Kushana period, in this period both men and women wore plates on their turbans. On the heads of an image of Kubera's and on the images of kinnaras (mythical beings), we see that on their turbans, plates are carved that seem to be made of cloth. The plates on the turbans of one image of Krishna and one of Ganesha are adorned. Therefore, they might be called *hemapattas*. Similarly, we see on the head of a Shalabhannjika a turban plate, which is also probably a *hemapatta*. There are also references to *hemapattas* in the Harshacharita and the Kadambari. Women in the Gupta period were equally fond of head ornaments as they were in the Kushana period. They resembled a modern ornament for the forehead known as a *mangatika*. In this ornament on the forehead, where the parting of hair begins, we have an adorned metal piece that is either circular or of any other shape. Paritathya, Ushnisa, Mundamala prabhrashṭaka, Apida, Garbhaka, Srasa, Srajamala, Sikhandaabharana, Sekharamauli, and Mukuta were the other prominent head ornaments of the Gupta period. Paritathya was an ornament that was pinned to the braid of hair³³. In the Brhatsamhita by Varahamihira, we have references to crowns with one, three, or five crests. Five crests were used for the emperor, three crests for the heir apparent and the empress, and one crest for the commander-in-chief of the army.

The Ear-ornaments:

Plain kundalas (rings) were probably made of metals like gold. They have been shown hanging and coming down to the shoulders. Women and men were equally fond of wearing kundalas. Ratnakundalas in the Mathura and the Lucknow Museums only have male images with this kind of ear ornament. There are two references to an ear ornament known as *makara-kundala* in the Kadambari. A betel leaf bearer (maidservant) is said to have *makara-kundalas* studded with gems in her ears. One notable feature of ear ornaments of this period is that, in the case of all the images, they are shown hanging from the ears. We see no ear ornament resembling a modern pair of tops in any of the images. Dantapatra, Pavitris, Karniavestana, Karniapura, Karnachuika, Karnaphula, Karnorpalas, Talipatta, Talapatram, Hematali-puta, Avatansa, and Trikantakas, etc., are the ear ornaments mentioned in the literature of the Gupta period. Pavitri means anything purified. Probably this was an ear ornament purified by the recitation of sacred hymns.

Neck Ornaments:

Neck ornaments made of only metal, probably gold, silver, or some other metal, were used in making these ornaments. They are plain and have no adornment and neither fit the neck closely nor are very long. Such ornaments were more popular with males than females. Another neck ornament was made by threading pearls or beads in a piece of thread or wire. These ornaments were of many kinds. Some pearl necklaces are small, so they closely fit the necks. These were very popular in the Gupta period and were called ekavalis. These were worn by men and women. Some neck ornaments had several chains of pearls that were intertwined. This ornament is thick in the center while the two ends of the ornament are comparatively thinner. It resembles a modern Hamsali and closely fits the neck. Such a neck ornament can be seen in the neck of an image of Vishnu in the Mathura Museum. Another ornament of this category is comparatively longer and comes down to the chest. A necklace of pearls has many chains was called Haravali. Various neck ornaments are mentioned in the literary works of the Gupta period. Of these, deserving special mention are Niska, Pralambas Pralambika, Lambanas, Lalantika, Urastutrika, Varnakas Sesahara, Gostana, Manavakala, Guchchhardha, Guchchha Devachchhanda, Naksatramalatas, Muktaxhachitachandrata, Haralekhika, Harasekhara Harayasti, Nirdhauta Harati, Tarahar, Hara, Muktavalita, Muktakalapatas, Pralam Baharat, etc. Yajnopavita (a sacred thread) was not made of cotton thread in the Gupta Period. Generally, they were made with pearls threaded or with more popular metals. The Yajnopavita was a symbol of this devotion to knowledge. An initiated individual moves forward to realize the ideal of goodness. This fact is borne out by a study of the Vedic literature.

Bhujabanda (armlet):

The armlets of the Gupta period were plain, and they looked like bangles. Probably they were worn in the same way as the bangles are worn. The armlets with vertical lines are very wide and can be seen carved in a male image and the arms of the goddess Yamuna. They seem to be made of metal. It seems that these kinds of armlets were not as popular in the Gupta period as they were in the Kushana period. There were armlets made of double plates as well. In the literary works of the Gupta period, several words were used for armlets, such as Keyura, Angada, Angadalambasutra, and Bhujabandha³⁴.

Kankana (bracelets): They are plain and are not very wide. A man or a woman is shown wearing three four seven or eight bracelets on one arm. Those Kankanas that have adornment with the same metal of which they are made can be seen only in two images. In the Mathura Museum, in the forearm of a woman-image. We see a bracelet inset with jewels in front, plain thin bracelets in the middle, and a thick bracelet with ornamentation resembling an intertwined rope in the rear. In the case of an image of Kubera in the pose of a person drinking wine in the Mathura Museum, we see a thick Kankana with a double design. In the front part of this Kankana is a plain metal strip, while on the back side, the metal plate has fine ornamentation with slanting lines. There were bracelets inset with circular pearls or other jewels. Three female and four male images of this kind of bracelet can be seen in the Mathura and the Lucknow Museum in two-woman images. In the literature of the Gupta period, many words such as Kankana, Avapaka, Pariharya, Kataka, Valaya, and Kanabhushana have been used for bracelets. Probably the word Kankana was a general word used for any ornament worn in the hand. The Amarakosha gives Avapaka and Pariharya as synonyms of a Kankana.

Mudrika (Finger-ring):

The Mathura and the Lucknow Museum have no such images that adorned finger rings. But other ancient sites of the Gupta period have sculpture-adorned finger rings made of metals such as gold, silver, and other metals. The words used for a finger ring are Urmika, Anguliya, Anguliyaka, Angulimudra, Mudranguliya, Mudrika, Anguliveshtana, Kataka, Kalashakha, Hastapatra, and Supurakas, etc.³⁵

Mekhala (girdle):

Some were made of pearl and had only one chain. In front, these girdles have one long metal plate. On both sides of this plate, there is a loose chain of pearls, which passes over the thighs and goes around the waist. Such girdles can be seen on an image of the goddess Yamuna and the figure of a woman carved on an adorned pillar, both included in the collections of the Lucknow Museum. Another girdle had a design resembling the skin of a snake similar to that of the Kushana period but only had three to four chains. Many words, such as Sarasana, Saptaki, Kinkini, Rashana, and Mekhala, are mentioned for a girdle in the literature of the Gupta period. According to the Amarakosha, Mekhala, Kanchi saptaki, Rasana, and Sarasana were words used for a chain that was worn by women around their waist³⁶. In the Natyashashtra it is stated that a Rashana had sixteen chains. Such a girdle cannot be seen in any of the images in the Mathura and the Lucknow Museums. It is stated that Rashana produced a jingling sound. A Mekhala made of Munja grass was worn by ascetics and men and women worshipping the gods. In the Kumarasambhava there is a reference to an ornament called Udarabandha, which was probably tied to the stomach.

Ornaments for feet:

Padavalaya and Nupuras were worn by both men and women. Nupuras were studded with jewels and had small bells attached to them that produced a jingling sound while walking³⁷. There were many varieties of Nupuras, such as Sinjila Nupuras (producing jingling sounds), Mmaninupuras (studded with jewels), and Bhasvatakala Nupuras (shining and producing sound). In the Kadambari, we have two references to Nupuras studded with a ruby. In the literature of the Gupta period, there are references to many ornaments of feet, such as Hamake, Padakantaka, Kinkani, Ksudraghantika, Tulakoti, Padangada, Manjira, and Charanalamkara. The ornament of feet known as Bichchua in Hindi was worn even as early as the Gupta period. This can be seen in the images of Yamuna and Ganga in the collection of the National Museum of Delhi. Some other ornaments of the feet were Pasuchika (Pada-Suchika) and Paghattika (Padaghattiku), which are mentioned in the Angavijja. Probably these ornaments were worn on the fingers of feet.

Probable reasons for wearing ornaments.

Ornaments stood as a symbol of beauty. It is adorned by both men and women. The inspiration to create them by the artisans has come from the nature that surrounded them. From the hymn of the Rig Veda, we know that people in the Vedic age wore ornaments to increase their physical beauty. Men adorned themselves with a variety of ornaments to attract women. With the birth of a human child, the tendency for self-preservation is born. The tradition of wearing ornaments for self-preservation had developed in the ancient period and can be seen today. Due to superstitious beliefs, people also wore ornaments to woo evil spirits. For medicinal purposes, as mentioned in the Buddhacharita, people wore garlands of pearls interspersed with medicinal herbs. In the Satapatha Brahmana, an ornament for the hand named Pratisara is said to be a defence against any kind of ailment. Sushruta Samhita states that the lobes of the ears of a child

should be pierced to protect it from disease and decorate the ears. The practice of wearing a ring in the fingers may keep the nervous system in order. There was astrological importance in wearing finger rings embellished with gems as well. Ornaments were also associated with their religious importance, such as the Rudraksha garland worn by ascetics, the Kushagra ring or Pavitri worn by men while performing rituals, and the Yajnopavita, a sacred thread, worn by Brahmana and upper hierarchy people.

Besides the functional and religious roles, the ornaments also signified the social status of men and women. Ornaments were valuable, and their collection was considered as treasure similar to coins. Metals such as gold, as the Atharvaveda mentions, in the treasure of man increased their life. Gajamukha, a kind of pearl supposed to originate on the forehead of an elephant, was considered auspicious and associated with the birth of a son when worn by a person. There are ornaments significant to married women, such as the Mangalika Sutra, Bichhua, and so on. These ornaments were a symbol of Suhaga to a married woman.

Conclusion

The ornaments of the Kushan and the Gupta periods give an insight into the various dimensions reflecting the beauty of designing and associating with different beliefs. This period gives glimpses of ornaments that are similar to present-day designs. This shows the rich heritage and the art of preserving the design serving for centuries. The ideologies remain intact from the past to the present age. The astronomical beliefs associated with different gemstones signify the rich knowledge of people. The knowledge was widely covered, and Indo-foreign infusion was present as well. The Hellenistic influence can be seen in the ornaments adorned by the Buddha and Bodhisattva images in the Mathura Museum. Thus, the influence inspired the artisans to make designs prevalent outside the Indian subcontinent infused with the surrounding trends.

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