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**SOME NOTES ON TRADITIONAL
MARATHA JEWELLERY**

ABSTRACT. The history of Indian jewelry goes back to about five thousand years. During its history, India has been conquered numerous times. However, despite the foreign influence, Indian culture has not lost its identity. The Marathas are carriers of a unique subculture, located at the junction of the Aryan and Dravidian worlds. While the political and socio-economical history of Maharashtra is well studied, there is a considerable lack of research on the culture of the Marathas. Meanwhile, the material culture of the Marathas has its own characteristics, particularly Maratha jewelries arouse profound interest. Ornaments of a Maratha woman is not just a decoration but a special language speaking to others about her status and the events of her life. Jewelry is a family treasury and amulets. Some of the ornaments in modern Maharashtra are known by Persian names, which is incorrectly attributed to their non-Indian origin. Much Maratha jewelry have an ancient history, evidenced in the paintings of Ajanta, sculptural groups, etc. This study provides a brief overview of some pieces of the Maratha jewelry. They are divided into several groups: jewelry for the head, nose ornaments, ear ornaments, neck ornaments, arm ornaments, ornaments for the hand, rings, ornaments for the waist, foot ornaments. The article provides local terms, descriptions of jewelry, their mention in historical sources and cultural monuments.

KEY WORDS: Deccan, Maharashtra, Maratha, jewelry, neck ornaments, ear ornaments, rings, feet ornaments, waist ornaments

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INTRODUCTION

The historical background of Indian jewelry takes us back to the history of the country itself as both are almost equally old. It was around five thousand years ago when the curiosity to beautify themselves by adorning with some jewelry pieces arouse in people. Since the beginning of the journey, the charm of jewelry and the beauty of Indian women have never been separated. It is rare to find any woman in India who would not love to decorate herself with jewelry.

In India, jewelry has not only traditional and aesthetic value but is also considered as a source of security in times of financial crisis. The amount of jewelry owned by a woman also signifies her status and reflects the wealth of her family. The decoration of a woman can tell about her social and family situation. Jewelry is also amulets. Throughout its history, jewelry has been an evolving art form. The beauty of Indian jewelry lies in the uniqueness of its design and the efforts of the workmanship involved in creating the intricate designs.

The tradition of adorning oneself with jewelry has gained even more vigor in the modern times. The art of creating intricate ornaments, with delicacy and patience, has been a part of India throughout its history. The patronage given by rulers to the arts as well as the artists has resulted in flourishing the beauty of Indian jewelry even more.

Jewelry used by Indian women has never been limited to any particular stone but has always shown a variety in materials. Ornaments made of various precious and semi-precious stones like emeralds, pearls, diamonds, rubies, sapphires, etc. have been used since ages. The variety of jewelry created in India is not only to suffice the aesthetic sense but also to fulfill the religious needs. Not only human beings are adorned with jewelry, but also it is specifically crafted for Gods and Goddesses and even for ceremonial animals like elephants, cows, and horses.

The art of jewelry has been patronized by the royal class of India since the ancient times when the right to own the most magnificent jewelry pieces could even lead to battles. Availability of the wide variety in Indian jewelry is mainly due to the difference in designs that depends on the regional needs and reflects various lifestyles and diverse tastes of people from different cultures. Thus, jewelers in Maharashtra used not only gold as a material but also silver, and often preferred pearls for decoration. Regional characteristics were formed under the influence of geographical, political, and socio-economic factors.

In the course of its history, Maharashtra has undergone profound influences, which could not but affect its culture. Meanwhile, many analyses of Marathas' material culture sometimes exaggerate Islamic influence, even though many of its aspects have ancient roots.

The political and socio-economical history of Marathas is often the subject of diverse research in India and beyond. Political surveys are not comparable with the study of culture and ethnography of the Marathas' region. Notwithstanding the fact that a large number of historical documents and other sources are available to us, the material culture of the Marathas has not received nearly as much attention as it merits. Yet the Maratha cultural history is of great interest and is part of the cultural history of India. The importance of jewelry is proved by the frequent references to the names of jewelry in *Rajavyavahara-Kosha*, the dictionary composed by order of Chhatrapati Shivaji in the 17th century. This dictionary contains the Sanskrit counterparts of the well-established Persian political-administrative and economic terms. At the same

time, it is provided with such detailed comments that some Indian historians call it the “Constitution” of the Maratha state. The *Kosha* provides the names of different ornaments and kinds of jewelry, accompanied by the Sanskrit equivalents (Patwardhan, Rawlinson 1928). The latter are interesting as far as they provide a link with the ancient past. The paintings of Ajanta, sculpture, works of art, as well as Maratha documents help to establish the connection of the times. The present paper is an attempt of studying the jewelry and ornaments of the Marathas.

MARATHA JEWELLERY

Head ornaments

Among the ornaments for the head, the first-named is a *tura* (*avatams*). The word frequently occurs in classical Sanskrit literature, while this ornament can be found in early Indian art. The word *tura* probably derives from *turban* (*ushnisha*), a head covering that was wound round the head in tiers. A ball of the mass of hair, collected within, was kept projecting on the forehead. This is illustrated in the Sunga, the early Shatavahana and the Kushan works of art. But in the Kushan sculptures of the 2nd century AD, we can notice that the projecting ball is replaced by a metallic plaque, which resembles a crest and which finest illustration can be found in the Yainasri cave at Kanheri. Later this ornament became very common in Gupta art. It survived even at the Maratha period following the medieval epoch (Murthy 1982).

Another head ornament, *padaka*, is described as *kateka*, meaning a ring or bracelet. This type of ornaments may have been produced in a shape of a round crest.

The *sansphul* (*sirahpushpa*) was another head ornament used by women. It was a beautifully embossed golden piece worn on the back of the head. It was cut to resemble the chrysanthemum (Mukharji 1888: 119). Abul Fazl describes it as “resembling the marigold” (Abul-Fazl 1948: 343). This is indicative of an ancient tradition; for Sanskrit literature abounds in references to young women wearing flowers in their hair. Floral chaplets soaked in unguents were even exported to the Roman empire (Warmington 1974: 198-199). However, it appears that no attempts have been made to reproduce flowers in precious metals; it may though have been done in the medieval period. The ornament was known as *chotiphul*, *suraj* or *rakti* in the Deccan. It has been common until recently in Maharashtra and was known as *phul*.

Among the ornaments for the hair, the *bhanglila* (*lalamakam*) is mentioned. It consisted of a chain and pendant, similar to those worn on the head even today in North India. The chain hangs over the parting (*simanta*) of the hair. It appears that the *lalamakam* was the same as the *lalatika* of the *Amarakosha* (Ramanathan 1971: 149), and its fine illustration is found in Ajanta (Murthy 1982: 69).

Bijavara was another hair ornament, mentioning in historical documents. We do not know how exactly this ornament looked like. Based on its North-Indian equivalent *tilaka*, it seems to be the same as or the *chatul-tilaka-mani* in the epigraphs (Fleet 1888: 165). The ornament was composed of a pearl string, with a disc or jewel at one end. It was to adorn the parting of the hair, with the jewel suspended on the forehead. It has appeared in Indian art since the Kushan period, and excellent representations of it one may find in Gupta art.

Nose ornaments

Besara, one of the nose ornaments (*nasa-pushpa*), was a floral-shaped nose stud. *Besara* is still in vogue in North India. It is described as “a broad piece of gold to the upper end of which a pearl is attached, and to the other end a golden wire, by which it is attached to the nose.” (Hendley 1909: 123) *Besara* was in use in Bengal too (Mukharji 1888: 111). In Bihar, it is known as *bulak*. Grierson has defined it as a ring hanging from the center of the cartilage of the nose. All this shows that *besara* was originally a floral-shaped stud, but in course of time its shape has changed considerably. This is corroborated also by the early literary evidence which refers to the nose ornament as the *nasa-pushpam*. It appears that it was a generic term for nose ornaments. The *Kosha* describes *phuli* as *nasa-pushpam* (Gode 1960: 174-176) while Abul Fazl as a “bud, the stalk of which was attached to the nose” (Abul-Fazl 1948: 343).

The common nose ornament was called *nath*. A woman wears this form of Maharashtrian bridal jewelry at the time of her wedding or during a puja ceremony. Woven with pearls, a *nath* has pink or white stone in the middle. This nose ornament is typical and unique of traditional Maharashtrian jewelry and differs from other nose pins worn by Indian brides. A *nath* as a part of bridal jewellery comes in different styles. Brahmani *nath* is popular for its Basra pearl and emerald. Such 22-karat curved *nath* has an uncut diamond surrounded by rare Basra pearls. What adds color to this nose pin are rubies and green emeralds that have been famous since the Peshwa rule. A *nath* set with gems and pearls was highly prized. It is known that Bajirao II bought one such *nath* for Rs. 5000 (Gupta 1923: 112).

The nose ornament was absent in the ancient Indian art and literature. Although it had figured in literature since the 11th century, it became common only during the Mughal period. It may have been introduced to India from Egypt, where it had had a long history (Gode 1960: 174-176).

Ear ornaments

Among the ear ornaments, only the *kudi* is mentioned. It is currently used among Maharashtrian women. It is a golden disc mounted with pearls, to be worn on the lobe with a screw to hold it firmly. The ornament dates back to

the ancient period being portrayed in the scene of the birth of Buddha on the Ajanta paintings (Griffiths 1973: 30).

Neck ornaments

Dhugdhugi (graiveyaka), the ornament for the neck, was a common neck ornament in ancient India, described in the *Amarakosha* as *grivayam alamkaro*. It was an ornament of the Central Asian nomads. The torque was commonly used in Central Asia long before the beginning of the Christian era, and was introduced to India by the Shakas. Specimens of torques have been found in the excavations at Taxila and were dated between the 1st century B. C. and the 1st century A. D. (Marshall 1951: 193).

The torque was called also *hans* or *hansali*. It was a solid collar of gold or silver and must have been heavy. The name *dhugdhugi* is not currently used. A *dhugdhugi*, studded with diamonds and other precious stones, is mentioned in historical documents (Sen 1920).

A beautiful rendition of Maharashtrian jewellery is Kolhapuri Saaj. It is necklace named after Kolhapur, a city in Maharashtra. Kolhapuri Saaj famous in Belgaum and the southern belt of Maharashtra. It carries immense importance in Maratha weddings as well as in the lives of Maratha married women. It is tied around the neck of the bride by the groom during the wedding rituals. It is a symbol of marriage and is worn by the bride until her husband's death. In North India such wedding necklace terms *mangalsutra*.

The Kolhapuri Saaj depicts ten avatars of Lord Vishnu. This traditional Maharashtrian jewellery is a long necklace that contains twenty one carved leaves. Out of the twenty one pendants, ten pendants represent the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, two pendants have ruby and emerald stones, eight pendants depict *ashtamangal* ('*ashta*' means eight and '*mangal*' means good happenings) and the last pendant is *taviz*. *Taviz* is a talisman or amulet in Indian culture, which protects from the evil eye, diseases and infertility, its wearing provides protection and well-being of its owner.

Another ornament for the neck was known as *mohanmala (pralambika)*. *Mohanmala* is still worn in Maharashtra. It is composed of round or barrel-shaped gold beads which are all of equal size. *Beads* are strung beautifully in two or three rows. *Pralambika* is mentioned in the *Amarakosha* (Ramanathan 1971: 157).

Thushi, a gold choker style neckpiece, is a part of bridal jewellery that originated in Kolhapur. It comes with gold beads and an adjustable small rope (*dori*). The jowar gold seeds in it indicate that the bride's new home will always be blessed with food. The simplest way to remember this traditional Maharashtrian jewellery name is its rhyming with the word '*khushi*'.

When one has few round gold coins strung together on a silk-braided patwa cord, one gets *putli haar*. It is called coin necklace or temple necklace

in Maharashtra . The coins have Lakshmi motifs, which symbolize the goddess of wealth. This is a part of Islamic culture. *Putli haar* has been an integral part of Maharashtrian bridal jewellery since the 17th century, at Shivaji's time.

Arm ornaments

Bajuband, *tolabanda* and *vaki* were the ornaments for the arm. *Bajuband* and *vaki* are still in vogue. The former is a broad belt-like ornament mounted on saree and tied to the upper arm. *Vaki* is an elbow ornament (*kurpara-bhushanam*) made of either gold or silver and worn on the elbow . It is embellished with stones. The metal band does not go through soldering except for the central part, where the ruby-set floral motif is placed. While the ruby symbolizes the sun, the red color is believed to be auspicious for Hindu brides.

Hand ornaments

Pahunchi and *hasta-kada* are the ornaments for the hand. The latter is a simple bangle-like armlet (*kade*) which is mentioned in the *Sabhasada Bakhar* (Joshi 1960: 19). A *pahunchi* was made of pearls. One such set of *pahunchis* had 100 pearls. Bajirao II bought a set of two *pahunchis* for Rs. 125 000 (Gupta 1923: 112). A bracelet was typically made of gold and decorated with pearls or diamonds.

A *pahunchi* was also made of small elongated beads. As these beads resembled rat teeth, a bracelet was called *chuha datti* (Bhushan 1925: 158). A bracelet consisted of small pointed prisms made of solid silver or hollow gold, each of the size of a barley grain and having a ring soldered to its base. These prisms were strung upon black silk string (Bhushan 1925: 161).

Another hand ornament, *tanvad*, described in documents as *kanika*, is not adequately understood for scholars.

Rings

Rings are referred to as *mudi* and *angusthana*. Although it was a ring with a large *bezel*, it probably also served as a seal. Later it became a generic name for the ring worn on the forefinger. *Angusthaka*, referred to as *shasta*, was a big ring with a broad face. Was it worn on the great toe or the thumb? A *jodvi*, a silver toe ring, is given to a bride by her mother-in-law and symbolizes the bride's entry into a new household. It is an obligatory attribute of any Marathi wedding.

Waist ornaments

Jorkamar, *ghungru* and *jajeria* were ornaments worn at the waist. The first one was *zar kamar*, a broad gold belt. It was probably made of woven

threads of gold, as the word *jar* and its Sanskrit equivalent *kati-sutra* would suggest. In ancient times, it denoted a belt woven of silken threads. *Ghungru* was a miniature belt (*kinkini*), which produced a sweet jingling sound. One can find illustrations of such belts in the Sunga art of the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. as well as in the Gupta art at a later period. *Jajeria* is probably derived from *janjie*, meaning “chain,” and the Sanskrit equivalent *srnkhalika* confirms this assumption. *Jajeria* is the same as *jhanjara*, which was a large hollow ring with short bells designed for rattling. *Gopa*, or *gopha*, to which contemporary documents sometimes refer, have probably the same meaning as *jajeria*. The ornament was made of gold and woven into a thin rope pattern (Bhushan 1925: 159).

Foot ornaments

Ornaments for the feet are referred to in historical sources as *painjan*, *polhara*, and *vala*. *Painjan* is perhaps a generic term for anklets. *Polhara* is of interest here; for its Sanskrit equivalent, *tulakoti*, is mentioned in ancient literature and represented in the Amaravati reliefs (Sivaramamurti 1956: 114) as well as in the Ajanta paintings (Griffiths 1983: 42). The name *tulakoti* implies that these are heavy anklets with massive ends hanging on either side of the leg and balancing each other. Its representations in the ancient Indian art show that the ornament had thick, heavy squarish ends. *Polhara* may have been a very similar ornament. Even today in the villages of Maharashtra women wear anklets with heavily-knobbed ends.

Vala or *bala* (*hamsaka*) was possibly a large ornament with a double curve. Because of the curves, it has been compared with a swan. *Hamsaka* is referred to by Bana and is very common in the ancient Indian art. *Vala* means just a simple anklet (Cowell, Thomas 1897: 261).

CONCLUSION

This study of various items of Maratha ornaments and jewellery demonstrates that our knowledge about them is far from complete, even though their history is not remote. In India, jewellery plays an important role in culture and rituals. However, we have to restore the history of jewellery drawing upon the fragments of paintings and sculptures as well as upon historical documents. The researchers seem to concern more with exact dates and political events than with material culture of people. Even so, our study shows that most of the ornaments of the Maratha period survived the ancient times. The only distinct contribution of the Muslims was the nose ornaments, which came to India around 1000 A. D. probably from Egypt, where it had had a long history. Many

items, however, survived the ancient past. This was natural because tradition dies hard, especially in a country like India.

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НЕСКОЛЬКО ЗАМЕТОК О ТРАДИЦИОННЫХ МАРАТХСКИХ УКРАШЕНИЯХ

АННОТАЦИЯ. История индийских украшений насчитывает около пяти тысяч лет. На своем историческом пути Индия подверглась многочисленным завоеваниям. Однако несмотря на иноземное влияние индийская культура не утратила своей самобытности. Маратхи являются носителями уникальной субкультуры, находящейся на стыке арийского и дравидийского миров. В то время как политическая и социально-экономическая история Махараштры достаточно хорошо изучена, культура маратхов практически не представлена в исследовательских трудах. Между тем материальная культура маратхов имеет свои характерные черты,

и особый интерес представляют маратхские украшения. Убранство маратхской женщины — это не просто украшения, а особый язык, говорящий окружающим о ее статусе и событиях, происходящих в жизни. Ювелирные изделия — это семейная казна и обереги. Часть украшений в современной Махараштре известны под персидскими наименованиями, что ведет к ошибочным предположениям об их неиндийском происхождении. Многие маратхские украшения имеют древнюю историю, о чем свидетельствуют фрески Аджанты, скульптурные группы и др. В данном исследовании дается краткий обзор некоторых маратхских украшений. Они подразделены на несколько групп: украшения для головы, украшения для носа, ушные украшения, ожерелья, украшения для предплечья, украшения для рук, кольца, поясные украшения, украшения для ног. В статье даются названия, описания украшений, отмечается их упоминание в исторических источниках и памятниках культуры.

К Л Ю Ч Е В Ы Е С Л О В А : Декан, Махараштра, маратхи, ювелирные украшения, ожерелья, ушные украшения, кольца, ножные украшения, поясные украшения

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