

## SIGNIFICANCE OF MYSTICAL, MAGICAL AND AUSPICIOUS SYMBOLS USED IN ORNAMENTS IN GANDHARA

*Samia Anwar*

### ABSTRACT

*The ornaments portray reflection of a society they belong and offers peep into social, political, economical, religious, spiritual and mythical aspects of population there. Some ornaments worn by sculptures suggest that they may have a religious or mystical significance as in case of jewellery worn by Bodhisattvas. Triratna, pipal leaf, lion shaped earrings and necklace composed of mani held in mouths of dragons or makra, abduction of Ganymede by Zeus scene on ornaments, are significant religious symbols and themes. As triratna, for example, symbolizes the Buddha, his teaching (Dharma), and Buddhist community (Sanga). Similarly different parts of shrubs and trees were used to form wreaths for their association with Greek male and female deities as laurel with Apollo, olive with Athena, Oak with Zeus, ivy with Dionysus and Myrtle with marriage (Oliver 1996: p. 271). Floral wreaths were worn to call up God to shower mortal beings with bounties of new vegetation, happiness, peace and hope of life at the end of life etc. (Hermery 2014: p.84).*

**Keywords:** Ornaments, Sculptures, Jewellery, Bodhisattvas, Buddha, Buddhist Community, Greek deities, Apollo, Gandharan Sculptures.

### INTRODUCTION

Jewellery worn by Gandharan sculptures was an index of fashion prevailing there as some ornaments no longer remain in use after a specific time period, whereas jewellery with religious significance were used in continuity. In ancient time ornaments were more than accessory of embellishment, they were connected with every aspect of life of wearer. Jewellery was used as an amulet for purpose of protection, for cure of ailments, to evoke celestial to shower blessings, riches and fertility. Images used on jewellery enable us to track the art, architecture, sculptures, dresses and hair styles that no longer remain in vogue along with analysis of the social, economical, religious and mythical approach of the society they belong. Ornaments bedecked sculptures and real jewellery items gleaned during excavation portray astral, zoomorphic, avian, floral, mystical and religious symbols.

## ASTRAL SYMBOLS

Artists skillfully portrayed astral objects as a symbol of devotion, terror and credence. Sun, earth and different phases of moon sanctify an ordinary ornament in olden days. In Indian mythology Sun is symbol of *Surya* who possesses majesty, power and wealth whereas Moon is *Candra*, who is patron of vegetation and fruitfulness (Leese 1969: p. 15). According to ancient Indian religious texts Sun and Moon are closely related as the coalition of Moon and Sun on a new moon is considered as a cause of creation of every type of life in world (Kramrisch 1976: p.36).

Crescent was considered as a salient member of astral cult in Central Asia and different lunar phases are used in ornaments for bride as an omen of fertility. For sake of marital successes in future it was considered auspicious to give crescent shape earrings to little girls by their fathers in Central Asia. (Anwar 2018: p.181). Cherished symbol of Islam a Crescent moon adorn on doors, dowry furniture, and on slate grave cenotaphs (Kalter 1989: p.142) and used in neckbands and in earrings in Swat (Pl. 1, Fig. 1) (Anwar 2018: P. 243).

Bodhisattva *Suryaprabha* is seen wearing a headdress with emblem of *Surya* on the chariot (Huntington, no.32). Male emerging from Corinthian Capital from Butkara I is adorned with a pectoral of crescent shape (Pl. 2, 2.1). Male donor from Butkara I is bedecked with a pectoral inset with full moon in center front and crescent on either sides of it (Pl. 3,3. 1 Fig. 2).

## ZOOMORPHIC AND AVIAN IMAGES

Zoomorphic and avian images are described in Buddhist and Hindu legends and are associated with various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (khan 2013: P.46). *Vishnu* as a saviour of world having celestial powers is incarnated as a boar, turtle, fish and *narasimha* (half lion and half man) (Gupta 2004: p. 13). Auspicious symbols of mythical or natural animals are used in jewellery as apotropaic images. Among such images seen in ancient jewellery of Gandhara are Lion (*Kirtimukha*), snake, crocodiles or *makras*, dragons and gryphons, sphinx, goat, ibex, ram, stag, leeches, fish and dolphins. Images of these animals are artistically and tastefully employed in jewellery worn from top to toe like headdress, earrings, necklaces, neckbands, armlets, bracelets, rings, belts, anklets. Even the skin of animals like antelope, boar, lion, cats, tiger, deer, owls, leopards and squirrels were used in ancient times to manufacture foot ware (Kumar 2008: p. 54).

For example, image of snake appears frequently in jewellery adorning sculptures and real jewellery found during excavation in Gandhara and out of this region. Snakes apotropaic images and symbol of mystical world hidden in bowels of earth (Lippitz 1996: Pp. 17, 18). *Srivasta* image in the shape of confronting ‘S’ shapes, resembles with opposing and intimidating upright hood of *nagas* are known as guard from Vedic times. For this attribute of protection *Srivatsa* is considered as one of thirty three *mahapurusalaksana*, which characterized a mighty being on its birth (Banerjea 1941:

Pp.607-8). *Srivatsa* mark chests of saints from kankali Tila (Smith 1901: Pl. x c). And for their property of defense are employed in ancient ornaments.

*Ananta* (Ayyar 1987: P. 159) or *angadas* (Robert 1996: p.488) (armlets) looked liked a spiral ornament resembled with snake coiling a branch of a sandal tree (Robert 1996: p.160) *Yashodra* from Jamrud is wearing an armlet of this type (Kurita 1988: Vol. 1, p.15, Pl. XII). Armlet with two to three spirals adorns donor and devotees from Butkara III (Pl. 4, 5).

Lippitz (1996) has catalogued one such gold armlet as well. (Pl.6, Fig. 3). Snake shaped earring is found from Dalverzin tepe (Neva 2008, p.53). Roman bracelet in shape of snake is housed in Dallas Museum (Lippitz 1996: Cat. No. 99d).

### TRIRATNA

This is a composite symbol consisted of *chakra* and *trisula* and occur frequently as an emblem of a universal king as on coins of Kushana kings (Rosenfield 1967: coins, 16, 157 and 227), on utensils from Taxila (Marshall, III Pl. 185), vine on a relief at Bharhut and a bud dangling from wishing- tree (Cunningham 1962 : Pl. XLIII), on royal throne shown at Bharhut (Cunningham 1962: Pl. XII, XXX) and Sanchi I (Zimmer 1955: II, Pl. 17), as a piece of reverence on a top of pillar in reliefs of Amravati (Barrett, Pl. XI b) and as an emblem on *toranas* as at Kankali Tila Bharhut (Smith 1901: Pl. XL).

Separate parts of this composite symbol have religious significance. *Trisula* is associated with *Shiva* and him with *trisula* appeared on Kushana coins, and on the reverse Kushana king is also shown with the same weapon (Rosenfield 1967: Pl. VII, IX, X, Pp.92-95). Other part of this composite symbol is *chakra* which *supports trisula*. It is also known as a wheel of law and due to its shape like that of Sun, it's associated with Sun God *Surya* and *Agni* (Coomaraswamy 1927: p.41) and a weapon of *Visnu* and one of the seven gems of *Cakravartin* (Zimmer 1955: Pl.37). The three parts of wheel- hub, rim, and spokes- symbolizes the three aspects of Buddhists teachings on wisdom, ethics and concentration (Beer 2003, p.14). Marshall, however states that wheel was the *amori rota* of Romans (Plautus 1965) the *inyx* (magical love charm) of the Greeks (Marshall 1911: Pl. Xlvi). Bodhisattva from Snaishah is adorned with a spiral torque having a *triratna* jewel sitting on a wheel (Pl. 7 a, b) (Fig.4).

### SEATED BUDDHA

This is the only ornament referred in the Buddhist scriptures. An ornament consisted of seated Buddha in *dhyana mudra* adorns the fan of turban of *Bodhisattva* kept in Peshawar Museum (Pl. 8, 8.1). The image of *dhayani* Buddha in headdress is well known sign for *Avalokitesvara*, as he stated in his texts, as shown by M. T. de Mallmann, to be wearing this attribute in his coiffure (Mallmann 1948: P.28, 38, 39). In Buddhist Art of India, image of Buddha in headdress is indicator of *Avalokitesvara*. According to

Yuvraj Krishan, many *Bodhisattva* sculptures with image of Buddha in their crown (Krishna 1996: p.59) found at Mathura give a bit of proof that the image of Buddha in the *mukuta* of the statues shows the prized deity of the donor (Krishna 1996: Pl.27 b). This symbol appears in crowns known as *Vajrasattva* headdress in Nepal, Tibet and China (Hungtington 2003: P.224, Cat.60, 61, 62).

### **SPIRAL SHAPE**

In Central Asian mythology Spiral shape is an instrument that measures passing of time and movement of sun as it appears on vessel from Middle Stone Age (Anwar 2018, p. 188). Characters in paintings from Ajina tepe are seen wearing large spiral ear ornaments (Neva 2010, p.24).

Spiral earrings are worn by rich devotee from Butkara I and both sexes from Bharhut stupa (Vardapandae 2006: P. 112, Pl.54). Actual gold earrings are found from a megalith at Nagarjunakunda (Excavations at Nagarjunakonda: P.9). Rich devotee from Butkara III is wearing charming ear ornaments (Pl. 9, Fig. 5). Large numbers of plain spiral earrings dated to (7th- 6th Century B.C.) are found in tombs of Mycenaean age at Enkomi. In later period as per fashion of using animal and human figures in ornaments, these are also incorporated with animals on ends (Marshall 1911, P. XXXIII).

### **HERACLES KNOT**

The motif of Heracles knot was in fashion in Greek, Roman and Parthia jewellery. Among Greeks it was worn for amulet purpose, it was believed to accelerate process of healing on wounds, whether it attained same attribute among Roman and Kushanas is not known (Fabregues 1991: p.282). Heracles knot appear in headdresses and buckles usually as Siddhartha i from Sahri Bahlol is wearing a turban with Heracles knot in center front (Pl.10, 10.1). A buckle in shape of a Heracles knot is discovered from a tomb in a nomad's burial from Tulchar (Fabregues 1991: p.56)

### **AMLAKA**

According to *Skanda Purana*, it's the first tree grown in the universe and *Brahma*, *Visnu* and *Shiva* dwell in *amlaka* tree (Kramrisch 1976: Vol. II, P.365). Thus these beads carry blessing of celestial and shower them on wearer of these beads. Marshall in his two different works used Indian and Greek terminologies for the same. (Marshall 1951: Vol. II, p. 654) (Marshall 1911: Pl. VI, No. 760).

Nobleman housed in Archeological Museum Swat is wearing similar necklace with an egg shape pendant (Pl. 11, 11.1). Actual necklaces of melon beads have been found from various sites in Gandhara and out of it like Sirkap (Marshall 1951: Vol. II, P.637), Bhir mound (Marshall 1951: Vol. II, Pl. 199, fig. 8, 9), Kaushambi (Sharma 1969: P.121) and Cyprus (Marshall 1911: Pl. IV, No. 678) (Pl. 12, 13).

## BULLA

The origin of *bulla* is of Etruscan and is known from ancient time. It was in use in the countries having relations with Roman Empire (Sophie McConnell 1991, p. 38). It was termed *bulla* after its shape like a water bubble, and was originally worn by kings (Plutarch, 288b). It was worn by domestic animals and children as an amulet for protection against evil powers. It appeared in Rome in 2nd Century A.D (Higgins 1980: p. 180) than imported to Palmyra Indian sub continent.

*Bullas* are usually used as pendants hanging from a chain or incorporated in torque. Female servant in birth scene from PM is wearing this type (Pl. 14, 14.1). Kid between *Panchika* and *Harithi* (Pl. 15, 15.1) is wearing *bulla* in his neck.

## AMPHORA

Virginia (1979) is of the opinion that *amphorae* was used in ancient times for utilitarian purpose to handle liquid as well as solid foodstuff. Kathia (2005: foot note, 172) has different interpretation. *Amphoras* were usually incorporated in pendants of ear ornaments. As an ear ornament of disc and pendant in shape of amphora adorns Athena from Lahore (Pl. 16, 16.1)

Marshall (1951: Vol.II, Pl. 190, a) recorded and published gold pendants consisted of two parts, fully blown flower of upper part is connected *amphora* of lower part with a hook. *Amphora* is provided with dolphin shaped handles having body of a turquoise (Anwar 2019, P. 212). Lippitz (1996: Cat. no. 95a) also published Greek counterparts of such gold ornaments, with typical Greek subject and execution decorative scheme.

## CONCLUSION

Among other modes of beautification jewellery was a prime source to flaunt oneself whether male or female. However, this is a complex phenomena imbued with social, secular and mystical contents which could be decoded as jewellery was worn to establish social, economical, religious status of a wearer. Ancient human beings opted various tools and methods for protection of their life, health and well beings. Fortunately, ornaments animated with spiritual, mystical and even mythical symbols promised them protection against calamities, evil powers, disaster, ailments and bad luck. This is the reason jewellery were made for every part of body, even foot ware and headdress and outfits were tastefully ornamented with motifs manifesting sacred symbols and themes.



Pl.1 Pectoral

Faiz-ur-Rahman AMS Swat

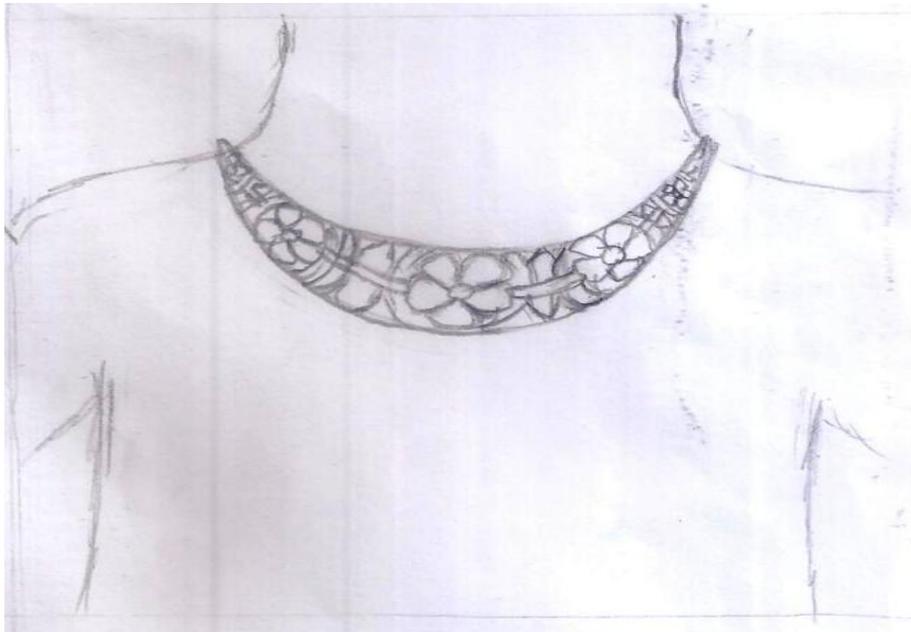


Fig. 1 Crescent shape neckband



Pl. 2 Male emerging from Corinthian capital



Pl. 2.2 Male wearing a crescent shape neckband



Pl. 3 Sculptuer of a Devotee from Swat



Pl.3.1 Neckband, with crescents on either sides of a full moon

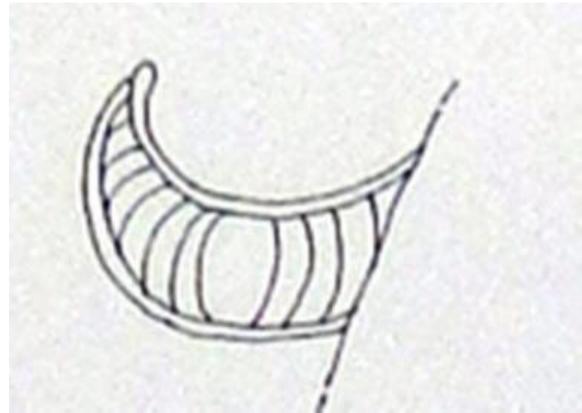


Fig.2 1 Neckband, with crescents



Pl. 4 Another sculpture from swat



Pl. 5 Devotee holding casket and bouquet



Pl. 6 Snake shaped armlet (Lippitz, Barbara Deppert, (1996). *Ancient Gold Jewelry at the Dallas Museum of Art*, Dallas Museum of Art: Cat. No. 99 d).

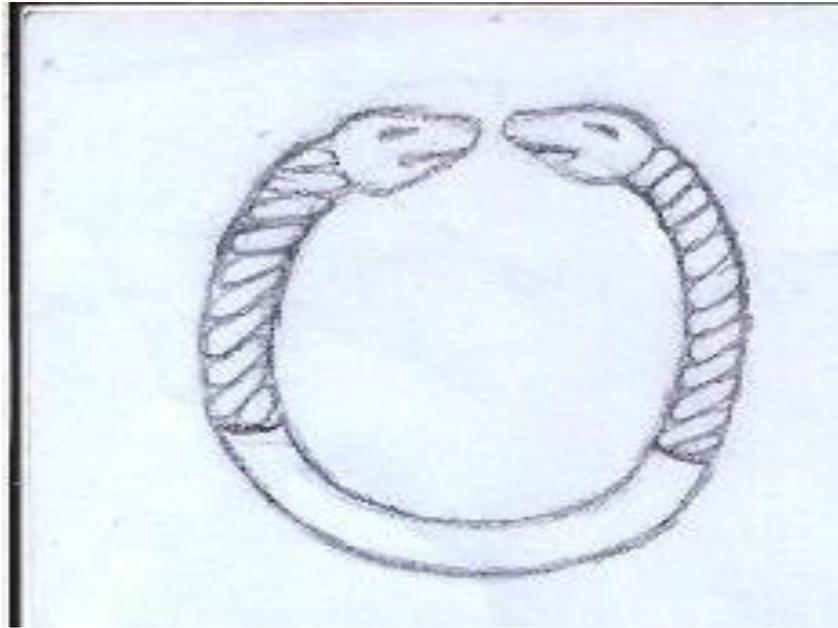


Fig. 3 Snake shape armlet



Pl. 7 Bodhisattva, M.F. Swati SSAQ Swat,  
Snaisha Grey Schist 60x30cm, Excavation



Pl. 7.1 Bodhisattva wearing a torque with *triratna* jewel sitting on a wheel

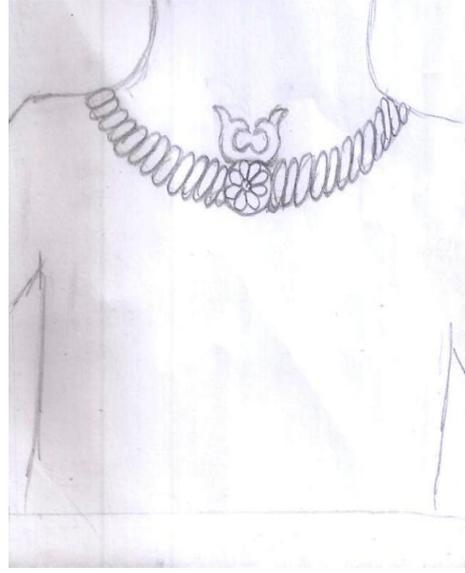


Fig. 4 Neckband with *triratna* jewel



Pl. 8 Standing *Bodhisattva* Avalokitesvara



Pl. 8.1 Image of a seated Buddha on a fan of a turban



Pl.9 A rich devotee

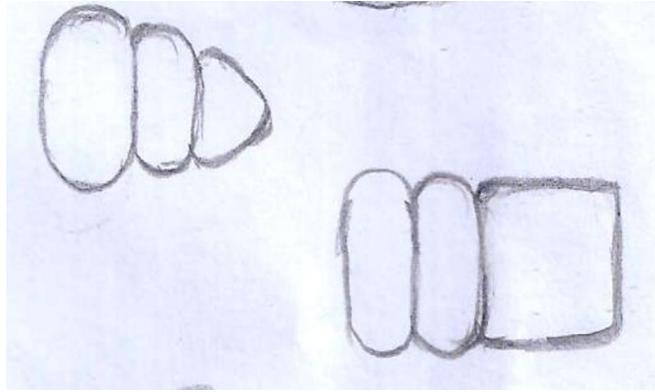


Fig. 5 Variety of spiral earrings



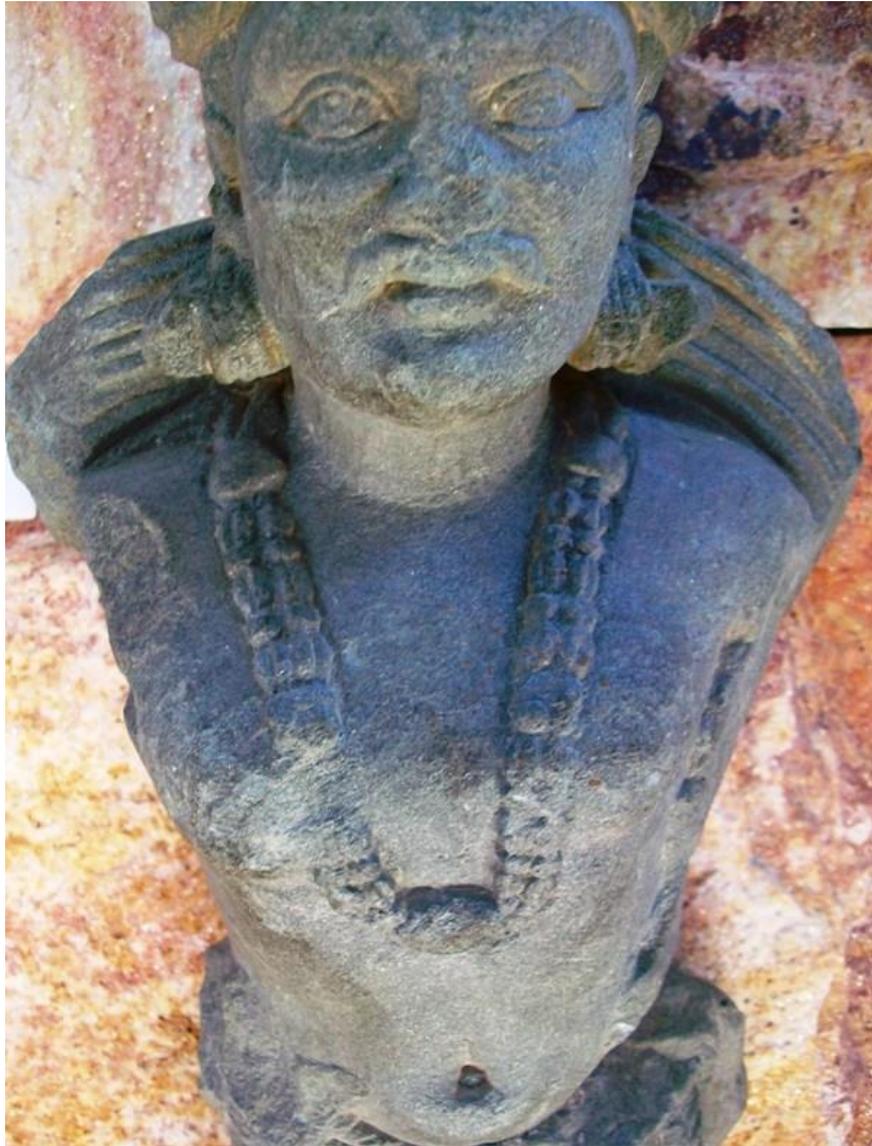
Pl. 10 Siddhartha in meditation



Pl. 10.1 Turban with *Heracles* knot



Pl. 11 Broken sculpture of Nobleman



Pl. 11.1 Man wearing a necklace of melon beads



Pl. 12 Melon beads



Pl. 13 Melon beads



Pl.14 Birth of Siddhartha



Pl. 14.1 Lady wearing *bullia* pendant



Pl. 15 *Harithi* and *Panchika* surrounded by children

Nidaullah Sehrai PM, Mardan, Sahri-Bahlol Schist 104.21x86.42 cm, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D



Pl. 15.1 Kid wearing a *bullae* pendant



Pl. 16 Athena, Humaira Alam, LM Schist  
H. 32 3/4



Pl. 16.1 Athena wearing *amphora* ear pendants

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