



Gaja-Laxmi, c. 2nd-3rd century, Chyasal Hiti, Patan

Pic. courtesy: Ulrich von Schroeder, Nepalese Stone Sculpture, Vol. 1 (Hindu), 2019

An Analytical Study of Ornaments of Images of the Early Licchavi Period (1st- 4th century CE) Sculptures

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Abstract

This paper looks at different types of ornaments belonging to the selected images of the early Licchavi period while identifying, comparing, and analyzing them. It also attempts to find out ancient and local names if they have any. The images that are selected and illustrated for analytical description are excavated ones comprising a few Nepali sculptures. The majority images are devoid of head ornamentations and are shown with heavy earrings and doughnut-shaped feet ornaments

Keywords : early Licchavi period, ornamentations, sculptures

Background

This paper aims to analyze, compare and identify different types of ornaments of some chosen images of the early Licchavi period and also to find out ancient and local names, if they have any. The images selected for analytical description are excavated ones and a few Nepali sculptures.

The early Licchavi period dates from the 1st to the 4th century CE (Vajracharya 2030 BS: 547-551). From time immemorial Nepal has been the shelter to the refugees from India who poured into this peaceful land, as the conflict

arose there. Besides, there had also been continuous inflow and outflow of both Nepali and Indian artisans. The result was a mosaic of cultural assimilation that resulted in the Indian influence on Nepali art. In the very beginning, images were depicted with ornaments of that period. However, in the later period, it could be noted that the iconographic rules and regulations were utilized in presentation of the images of deities.

This period was the contemporary of the Gandhara School in India that flourished during the 1st-5th century CE. The best example of Gandhara image is the icon

of Bodhisattva, which can be regarded as a good influence (Alkazi 1983: 114).

The Gandhara School was influenced from the Greco-Roman style of art. It was a hybrid in nature and inspired by the Greek deities. Consequently, the physiognomy of Buddha image was identical to that of Apollo, the Greek deity. Muscular body, hair with wavy curls, body covered with a full *toga* (long dress) and *urna* (a spiral or circular dot placed on the forehead of Buddhist images) were the features of the Gandhara Bodhisattva images. The Gandhara images lacked spiritual appearance and laid emphasis on the folds of the garments devoid of ornaments.

The Nepali images, prior to the 5th century were influenced from the Gandhara and Mathura style. Lama Taranath views, "The earlier style of Nepalese art had Mathura/Gandhara influence; however, later it was opted for their own indigenous style."

These discovered artifacts, images, objects and monuments provide authenticity to produce history. Thus, has helped in throwing light into the ornaments depicted in art during that particular period.

Ornaments (1st-4th century CE)

The origin and evolution of ornaments are buried in antiquity. In the beginning of the civilization, men, women and children had desired to look pretty, beautiful, charming and handsome (Bhusan 1953: 1-3). The primitive people had no means to satisfy their inherent

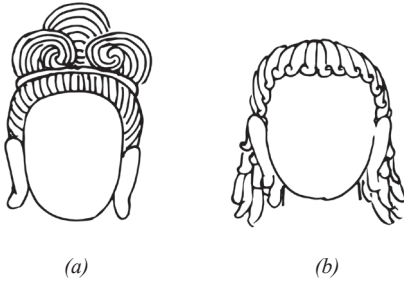
desire for personal adornment. They therefore turned to his surrounding for materials. They adorned themselves with ornaments fashioned from dried grass stalks of creeping plants, seeds, dried fruits, bones, ivory, flower, cowries and seashells.

As the civilization advanced they started the woodcarving and then later began bronze, lead, gold, and silver castings. Personal adornments and adornment techniques advanced and changed as the civilization developed. Ornaments vary from society to society. The ornaments are worn not only for adornment, but some of them have certain religious and superstitious reasons behind wearing them. Sometimes people also wore ornaments for the customs and social beliefs. The wearing of elegant ornaments also signifies social status, wealth and prestige in the society. Gold has been regarded economic securities in times of need.

Different types of *Shirābhushana* (headdress)

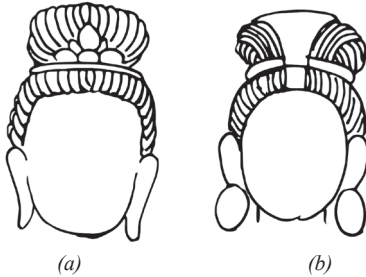
***Mukuṭa* (crown):** The Greek word 'coronal' denotes a crown. It began as an elaborate method of dressing up the hair as found among the Polynesian and African tribes (Hasting 1954: 337).

Diadems or crowns had been in fashion since time immemorial. The wearing of crowns or distinctive headdresses during festive occasions by particular class of people such as king, queen, chieftains, merchants, medicine men and other members of different society depended upon their status and position. The shape



(a)

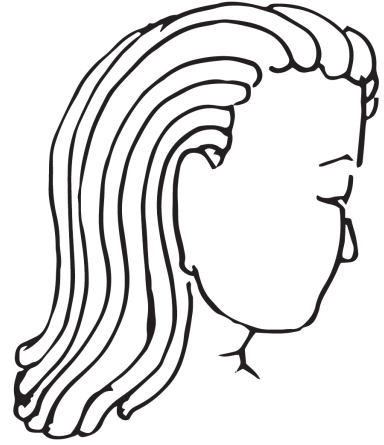
(b)



(a)

(b)

Different styles of headdresses (a-d)



Garuda

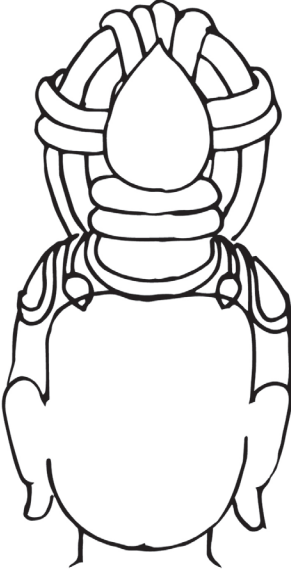
and sizes of the *mukuṭas* vary and so are their designs. Some of the *mukuṭa* are as follows:

***Kirīṭa-mukuṭa*:** There were different types of crowns, most commonly seen were the *Kirīṭa* and *Mahākirīṭa-mukuṭa*. The *Kirīṭa-mukuṭa* are made of gold. Some of them are decorated with precious and semi-precious stones. They are further categorized into *Kirīṭa* and *Mahākirīṭa* (Mishra 1987:143). This *mukuṭa* is mostly seen with the Viṣṇu images. The *kirīṭa-mukuṭa* seems to be the popular amongst of the Nepali artists and artisans. Majority of Viṣṇu images of Nepal are depicted with *kirīṭa-mukuṭa*.

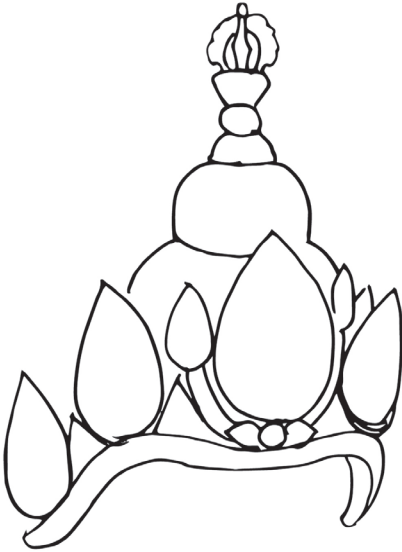
In the *Mānasāra Shilpashāstra*,

it has been mentioned as '*Kirīṭa Sarvabhaumasaya chadhirajasyayojyakrama*' (Shivarammurti 1963: 26). It is said that Lord Viṣṇu who resides with other deities is shown wearing a *kirīṭa*.

***Māhākirīṭa-mukuṭa*:** It is a part of the *kirīṭa-mukuṭa*. If it is over-decorated with precious stones, it is known as *mahākirīṭa-mukuṭa*. The image of Viṣṇu Vikrānta (467 CE) from Tilganga, Pashupatinath wears a *kirīṭa mukuṭa*. The *kirīṭa*, engraved on Bhairava image is known as *Kirtimukha*. Such *kirtimukha-kirīṭa* can be seen on Jalaśayana Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu reclining on Śeṣha Nāga) in Budhanilkantha.



Karanda-mukuta



Panca-mukuta

Karanda-mukuta: It is made of precious and semi-precious stones (Shivarammurti 1963: 25). The *karanda-mukuta* tapers towards the top. In the earlier period, the *karanda-mukutas* used to be smaller in size. Later on size of the *karanda-mukuta* seeme to increase. The *karanda-mukuta* is seen with lesser known deities such as gandharvas, kinnaras, nāgas, etc.

Ratnamukuta: Ratna refers to precious stones, and mukuta refers to a crown. The ratnamukuta hence is a crown decorated with precious and semi-precious stones. The ratnamukuta varies in shape and size. It is made of numerous precious and semi-precious stones. This is popular among the sculptors of Nepal.

Tri-mukuta: Tri signifies the word three. Thus, it comprises of three pinnacles decorated with precious stones. It is believed to have the power to shun away sadness. The three pinnacles of the crown signifies – *sattva guna*, *raja guna* and *tamas guna*. While the Buddhists interpret them as – *Buddha*, *Dharma* and *Sanga*. This type of crown can be seen on the Nepali images of the later phase. It is used in both the Hindu and the Buddhist images though the three pinnacles signify different meanings respectively.

Panca-mukuta: The early crowns are not seen with *pancha-mukutas*, but they gained popularity among in the later period. *Panca* means five and *mukuta* means a crown. Hence, it has been depicted with five raised peaks that denote or symbolize the Panca Dhyani Buddhas. This type of crown is mostly worn by Panca Dahayni Buddha,

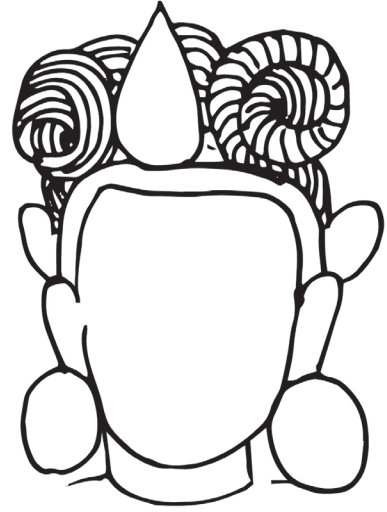


Tri-mukuta

Dhyani Buddha and Bodhisattavas. In the Kathmandu valley, Vajracharaya priests put on *Pañca-mukuta* during the special rituals.

Jaṭā-mukuta: *Jaṭā* signifies long hair, usually associated with sages, saints and hermits (Shivarammurti 1963: 25). They grow long matted hair and shape it in form of a raised hairdress. The *jaṭā-mukuta* is not a separate crown but it is a raised headdress made up of matted hair. As mentioned in (Mānasāra 43/30) that *jaṭā-mukuta* was the headdress that is seen on the head of Rudra or Mahādeva.

Pārvati is also occasionally shown wearing *jaṭā-mukuta* (Shivarammurti 1963: 24-25). The *jaṭā-mukuta* is usually decorated with a crescent moon, skull, or flower. On the *Jaṭā-mukuta* of Shiva, one can see a crescent moon on it. It signifies glory. *Jaṭā* or the matted hair



Jaṭā-mukuta

of Shiva also signifies all the medicines (Aryal 2000: 131–135). If the *Jaṭā* is tied by *rudraksha mālā*, it is considered as *Rudraksha Kāla* or period. 'Pitamahsaya rudrasa *Jaṭā-mukuta* vojyakarma' meaning rudraksha beads worn around *Jatā mukuta* (Aryal 2000: 131–136). There are different types of *jaṭā-mukuta* such as – *rudraksha jatā-mukuta*, *māga jatā-mukuta*, and *tulsi jatā-mukuta*.

The images belonging to the 1st to the 4th century CE comprise mainly of mother goddesses but very few images of male deities. All these goddesses have been shown without any headdress, while their hair-style differs from one another.

Description of male/female *Shirābhushana* (headdress)

Early images are mostly of mother goddesses devoid of head ornaments or

headdresses.

- i. Mother goddess, Koltole
- ii. Hariti from Balaju, 2nd /3rd-century CE
- iii. Vaishnavi from Subalhiti, 3rd-century CE
- iv. Mother goddess, Haugal Bahal, Patan, 2nd/3rd-century CE
- v. Kumari, Balku, 2nd/3rd-century CE.
- vi. Vaishnavi from Kirtipur, 2nd/3rd century
- vii. Shakti, Rastriya Nachghar, 3rd century CE.
- viii. Mahismardani, Hadigaon, 3rd century CE.
- ix. Parvati, Shiva Parvati panal, Kirtipur, 4th century CE
- x. Mahesavari, Ganesh Temple, Kirtipur, 3rd century CE
- xi. Female attendant, Solar Divinity, Kumbhesavara, Patan

Although the Viṣṇu image at Handiguan and the Chaturmurti image at Rastriya Nachghar are badly eroded, elongated conical-shaped crowns can be seen. The image of Chaturmurti image of the 3rd century is depicted with a raised crown like kirīṭa-mukuṭa (Fig. 6c). The other images of the Chaturmurti are also eroded beyond identification except the head ornaments.

The image of Viśvarūpa at Kutubahal (3rd century CE) is eroded but the shape of kirīṭa-mukuṭa can be identified.

- i. Shiva, Rastriya Nachghar,

3rd century CE

- ii. Viṣṇu, Handigaun, 2nd/3rd century CE
- iii. ViśvarūpaViṣṇu, Katubahal, 3rd century CE
- iv. Vāsuki, Kumbhesvara, Patan, 4th century CE
- v. Solar Divinity, Kumbhesavara, Patan, 3rd century CE
- vi. Solar Divinity, National Museum, 4th century CE

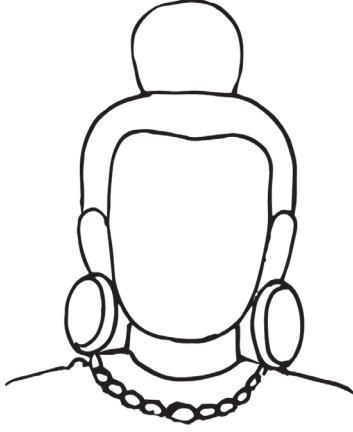
Karnabhushana (Earring)

Earrings of different varieties are worn by both males and females. The different earrings are termed as mukuṭakantaka, dwirajik, (Bihari 2018 BS, 12/11/11, Vol. 2) trijick, bajragava, karnakundala, karnaphur, karnika, karnaphool, trikantak (Giri, 1987, pp. 256).

Different religious texts mention different types of karnakundala. Some of which are – patrakundala, makarakundala, samkhakundala, ratnakundala, bakrakundala, pushpakundala, and sarpakundala.

Viṣṇu is mentioned with makarakundala and kamalapusphakundala (Giri, 1987, pp. 843). Shiva is also depicted with kundalas, among which the most common one is sarpa-kundala (Kumar, 1980, pp. 70). Some of the Hindu religious texts mention goddess Kālī wearing preta-kundala.

Some of the Buddha images also are shown wearing simple kundala on his long earlobes. Bodhisattava on the other hand are shown wearing different



Patra-kundala

types of ornamented earrings of various designs.

The image of Chaysalhiti Gagalexmi is depicted with a very heavy karnabhushana falling on the shoulders. Likewise the Chaturmurti image at Rastriyanachghar has kundala reaching down to the shoulders. The images of mother goddess of Haugal Bahal, Vashanabi Kirtipur; Maheshwari, Kirtipur; Brahmani, Kirtipur; Kumari, Handiguan; Harati, Balaju; Maheshwari, Deo Patan; Varahi, Balkhu; Kumari, Balku; Vashanabi; Patan are depicted with heavy karnabhushana reaching down to the shoulders.

Kanthābhushana (necklace)

During the primitive period, both the males and females used to adorn themselves with various available materials such as shells, flowers, coloured stones, feathers, flowers, etc. as a kanthabhusana or necklace.

Banamālā: A *banamālā* is made of

different types of flowers. Usually it has a flower known as *kādambaripuspa* in the center. Lord Viṣṇu is said to have worn a *banamālā* that reached down to his knees. *Srimad Bhagavata* mentions Viṣṇu wearing *kumudapuspha* and white lotus necklace (Bihari 2018 BS: 262-297).

Tulsimālā: It is associated with Viṣṇu. The belief persists that those who wear it are cured of any diseases. Hence, it has both religious and medicinal values. Viṣṇu worshippers wear *Tulsimālā* (Bihari, 2018 BS, 12/11/11, Vol. I, pp. 237).

Shree Banamālā: It is a necklace or mala worn on the neck. *Brihatsamhita*, *Shreemadbhagwat* (Bihari 2018 BS: 207-297). *Viṣṇudhramottara* (Aryal: 2000: 130-137) mentions Viṣṇu wearing *Shreevatsa mālā* and *banamālā*.

Rudrākṣamālā: It is associated with Shiva. Legend has it that when Shiva cried his tear drops fell to the earth and they turned into *rudrākṣa*. It is believed to have both religious and medication values (Bihari 2018 BS: 783).

Sarpamālā: It is associated with Shiva who is shown wearing a serpent on his neck. However, other deities like Bhairava, Garuda, Nāgarāja, Nāgin are shown with *sarpamālā*.

Mundamālā: It is made from human skulls. The deities associated with the *mundamālā* are Kālī, Bhairava and other tantric deities. In Nepal, Vajrayāni tantric deities wear *mundamālā*.

Also, there are other numerous *kanthābhushana* such as *pralambika*,

ursutrikā, devachandra, nakchatryamālā, barnasir, sārikā, padak, guchhā, nilalavanik, shribatsa kantha, banmālā, pusphamāla, rudrakshyamālā, sarpamālā, shreebatsa kantha, etc.

Yajnopabita: *Yajnopabita* also may be considered as an ornament. However, it has been regarded as a sacred thread worn by the Brahmins and Kshaytrias. It was worn by the Hindu deities, but the Buddhist deities as well. It comprises of cotton, silk, nāg, skull, leather, and some ornamented with beads too. However, its length differs. In *Srimad Bhagavat*, Viṣṇu is said to wear *Yajnopabita* falling down to his navel (Bihari: 2018 BS: 834). Shiva wears *yajnopabita* with a garland of snakes, while Chāmundā, Bhairavi and Kāli wear *yajnopabita* with a garland of human skulls.

Yajnopabita has not been noted amongst the images belonging to the 1st to 4th century in Nepal. Whereas the earlier images from the neighboring state of India are found depicted with elongated *yajnopabita*. In Nepal, we come across with *yajnopabita*, simply ornamented with beads. A few images have been depicted with deer skin *yajnopabita*, or *ajna-yajnapabita* with animal head on it.

The male images of this period, the *kanthabhushanas* seem to be very simple. Shiva at Rastrya Nachghar of the 3rd century CE is badly eroded but one can identify single beaded *kanthabhushanas*. Likewise Viṣṇu from Hadigoan, 2nd/3rd century and Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, Kutubahal, 3rd century CE, and Solar Divinity, Kumbeshvara, Patan, 4th century CE, all are depicted with

single elongated beaded necklace, very much similar to the necklaces discovered at Harrappa and Mohenjadarō. The image of Vasuki, Kumbeshvara, Patan 4th century CE, however, is shown with a broad collar-like *hasuli*.

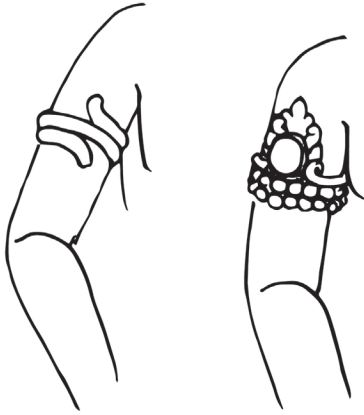
The images belonging to the 1st to 4th century CE are depicted with very few *kanthabhushanas*. The oldest image of mother-goddess Gaja-Laxmi from Chaysahiti is seen wearing a very short *kanthabhushana* with a single bead. Whereas the Indian image of Gaja-Laxmi, 1st century CE (Banaras Hindu Museum) is depicted without *kanthabhushana*.

At Mathura Museum, we come across an image of Vasundharā of the 1st century CE depicted with a double beaded necklace (Bangdel 1982: p1. 16, 19).

The early images like mother goddess, 1st- to 2nd century, Haugal Bahal (Fig. 4); Maheshvari, Kirtipur; Brahmani, Kirtipur; Kumari, Kirtipur; Kaumari, Balku; Shakti image of the Chaturmurti, 3rd century, Rastryanachghar are depicted with small beaded *kanthabhushana*. It is very much similar to the beaded necklace worn by Ekanamsa, Patna Museum, 1st century CE. Precisely, female figurines of this phase were adorned with simple and short *kanthabhushanas*.

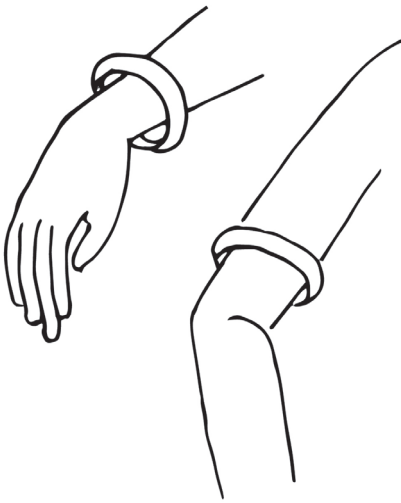
Male *Kanthābhusanas*

Both the male and female images from the 1st to 4th century are seen wearing simple *kanthabhushanas*. Some of these necklaces are very much similar to those images, discovered from the excavation



Sarpa-baju-bandha

Ornamented rudraksha hasta-abhusana



Ordinary wristlet (Duhirak)

Ordinary keyur

of Lumbini and Kapilvastu.

***Hastābhushana* (bracelets)**

Bracelets and armllets worn by the images from the 1st to 4th-century look very simple. Vaishnav Purana mentions that the deities are depicted wearing two types of hastabhushanas. Those worn on the arms are: keyur, panchak, katak,

amgad, bajubandh, etc. Lord Viṣṇu wore amgad, keyur and bajubandh.

Lord Shiva is depicted wearing rudrakshyamālā on his arm. Those worn on the wrist are: duhirak, bair, wabhimandal, nandayaryarta, navaratna, baikhesta, trihirak, shukti, muduka, mudra.

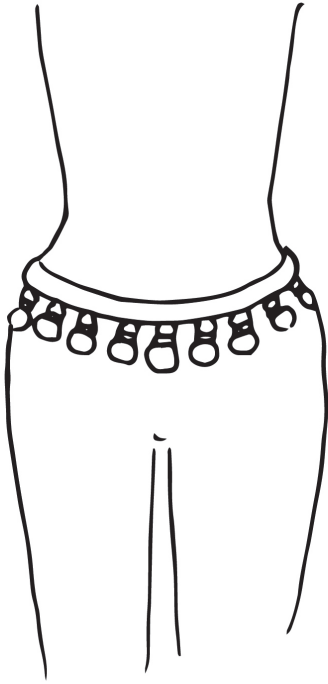
Analysis

Most of the early 1st century images are seen with large and heavy doughnut-shaped wristlets on each wrist. Likewise, a few images are also depicted with various shaped armllets. Images from the 4th century are seen with many bangles or bracelets. However, during the later phase, hastabhushana underwent changes from heavy doughnut-shaped to more decorative, small and exquisite. Ornamentation and decoration with both precious and semi-precious stones seem to be in use.

Through the analytical study one can conclude that both males and females used to wear hastabhushana to adorn themselves during this phase, and continued wearing of hastabhushana with different shape, size and design.

***Kamarbandh* (waist ornaments)**

Kamarbandh or waist ornament were popular amongst both males and females. In Lumbini Kapilvastu numerous manko or beads were used to make mekhla or waist ornaments. Deities are depicted with different ornamented cloth and precious metals to adorn waist. Some of the decorative waist ornamentations used during this period are as follows:

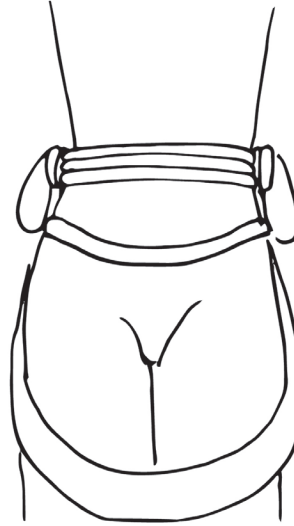


Kamar-bandh

Kachabandh: It is comprised of a strip of cloth adorned with precious and semi-precious stones. It used to be worn on the waist. This is worn by both males and females to adorn themselves.

Chinnabhir: This is a kind of cross-belt. It is also made from precious metals, and sometimes from rudrakashya. Images from Amravati, India are depicted with chinnabhir.

Uddharbandh: *Uddhar* refers to stomach and *bandh* means to tie. Uddharbandh is a kind of belt. An ordinary uddharbandh is tied around the upper portion of stomach. Some of them are also ornamented. Although today people use a belt to tie their stomach, the name uddharbandh is no more in use.



Uddhar-bandh

Suvarna Baikachik: It is similar to chinnabhir. It is a cross-belt. This belt is made up of suvarna or gold. It was worn only by goddesses.

Patukā: It is usually worn to hold *dhoti*, *sari*, or *antariya*. It is comprised of soft material, with more than 15 to 20 hand-length. It was used as a decorative piece. The use of *patukā* continues to this day amongst many women in Nepal.

Kattisutra: It has been in vogue since times unknown. The images are depicted with different forms of *kattisutra*. *Kati* separates between lower and upper body, and a *kattisutra* is worn underneath. In *kattisutra*, importance is given to tying of the knot. In order to make it more ornamental, symbols like lions, makara, flowers, etc. are used. Since a lion signifies gallantry, the majority of male deities wear *kattisutra* with the symbol

of lion, whereas female deities wear it adorned with makara and flowers. In some cases, they are further decorated with gold and frills. Numerous religious texts mention it as mekhala but there is difference between a mekhala and kattisutra.

Generally during the 1st and the 4th century, the images were not depicted with *kuchhabandh*, *chinnabhir* and *suvarna baishkshak*. However, wearing of kattisutra was common among both males and females during that period.

The image of Yakshya of 1st century (National Museum, Chhavani) is depicted with a broad geometrical shaped hip-belt. Such type of hip-belt was common among the contemporary Indian images. The tying of *kayabandh* in a circular fashion continued to the later period. Gaja-Laxmi, 2nd-3rd century of Chyasahtole, Patan and many other images of this period are found to be adorned in similar fashion.

The image of the seated Surya of 4th century at Aryaghat is depicted with ornamented kattisutra or mekhla with frilled out pleats falling between the legs in a fanned out fashion. Wearing of mekhla was in great fashion during the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE in Lumbini and Kapilavastu. They were made up of manko which is completely lacking among images discovered within the valley belonging to the 1st-4th century CE.

Solar divinity at the National Museum of Kathmandu is depicted with highly ornamented broad hip belt tied to hold

his antariya. Seated Surya at Aryaghat, Pashupati of the 4th century CE, has a rolled *kayabandh* falling in a in a circular fashion with frilled out knot on either side. Wearing of *kattisutra* and *kayabandh* or hip-belt continued, only designs differed as time and centuries passed.

***Padsukhadi* (feet ornaments)**

Beside adorning of different parts of human body, adornment of feet had also gained favour since a long time. Among different types of feet ornaments the most important ones are – *nupur*, *kalli*, *kar*, *char*, *marthi*, *heeranumakara*, *balkanakar*, etc. Shreemad Bhagwat mentions that Lord Viṣṇu wore nupur. (Shreemad Bhagwat: 834.)

Viṣṇupurana mentions of Lord Viṣṇu wearing *kalli* (Viṣṇupurana, 5/4/13). Likewise other deities are also mentioned of wearing feet ornaments.

It is interesting to note that between the 1st to 4th century the majority of male figurines is devoid of feet ornamentations. Generally *padsukhadi* or feet ornaments are worn by both males and females.

It can be concluded that figurines belonging to the 1st to 4th-century figurines are devoid of head ornamentation. The majority of female figurines with bare upper torso were very simple. A few ornaments they wore were very heavy earrings and heavy doughnut-shaped feet ornament, which cannot be seen later.

It can be noted that images in India belonging to the 1st-4th century are also



Royal personage or unidentified Hindu deity, c. 4th century, National Museum, Chhauvi, Kathmandu
Pic. courtesy: Ulrich Von Schroeder, Nepalese Stone Sculpture, Vol. I (Hindu), 2019.

depicted with similar ornamentation, however with slight differentiation. It is noteworthy that despite Indian influences the artisans of Nepal yet maintained their own unique style.

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