

## **The Costumes and Ornaments Depicted in Indian Sculptural Art Reflect Changing Fashions of the Societies through Ages**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Ancient Indian art has always been a purely religious one, not only its architecture but sculpture as well. All arts were employed primarily for secular purposes. Ancient Indian art owes its origin to the growth of "Buddhism". Our history is a witness to different types of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, gods, demons etc. The heroic form of Indian sculptured figures has been, and at all times remained the same. The modified forms of ancient Indian Ornaments and costumes are found in the costumes of the kings, of brides and bridegrooms and even in the Costumes in the theatres which represent subjects taken from the ancient Indian legends everywhere. It is a surprising fact that the non-Aryan districts of India or the lower castes in the old civilized parts like Burma, Siam, Tiber, Mangolia, Java, Bali outside India, frequently now show more antique forms of costumes and articles of jewelry, since in the course of time the latter adopted other fashions in costumes and ornaments. The whole question deserves special and detailed examination in which the monuments of antiquity should play a prominent role. At present I must content myself with the concept of costumes which are uncommonly rich and tastefully arranged forming an artistic and creative motif. The ancient Buddhist art of India never deteriorated into the rough, monotonous, and mechanical sort of style in which the so-called Assyrian art covers the figures with ornaments and garments in rich patterns. The use of articles of adornment and patterns of clothing had a great artistic influence in respect to sculptural modeling of the forms. The shoulders over loaded with broad chains, the arms and legs covered with metal rings, the bodies encircled with richly linked girdles, never attained an anatomically correct form. Everywhere the carrying out of a clear outline was indicated with by use of broad ornamental lines, rich and tasteful in themselves and as a result the limbs have received at their best with seemingly correct finish.

**Key Words :** Buddha, Architecture, Sculpture, Ancient India, Clothing, Ornaments

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the many centuries, artistic development has continued with a greater and still greater the mastery over the technique of sculptural and conceptual details. The art of India has a very definite individuality which is difficult for the west to understand or appreciate. In the past it was truly naturalistic, showing Nature in an idealized and even stylistic idiom. India's Gods and heroes have always been young, strong, and handsome; her goddesses and heroines are warm and sensuous in its true sense, exhibiting the charm and richness of

everlasting and matured youth. Her Yakshis and dryads have been conceived as semi-divine beings, depicted in most attractive and appealing forms. Beneath their outward form lies tradition, symbolism, sentiments, and feelings which always are Indian in character. The quality of Indian art was possible only because the Indian artists Always considered their duty to reflect a harmonious world of animals, men, women alike the whole cosmic universe. This mission motivated the ancient sculptors and pointers to spend many years in their lives in mastering the technical requirements, and enhancing skills to the maximum. They were always concerned about

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their creation that mattered, not the creator. For the same reason no artworks were actually signed or dated with the names of their Creators. As a result, Ancient Indian art was based truly on the phrase “art for art’s sake”. The artist was happy and fully satisfied in producing the artworks and create them for the symbolic or religious or secular purposes. Ancient Indian art has always been reposeful, poised, and gentle and simple in various aspects. In Indian sculptural art there has been a great freedom in infusing dynamic vitality and movement in the compositions. Indian art has always valued spiritual concepts and respect and love of nature more than anything else. So, we find in the compositions that nature played an important role and the inner dominant character overflowed the created forms. No wonder the art of India has spread far beyond its shores and portrayed its original concepts in all the other lands too where it succeeded in gaining lot of appreciation. On the whole it can be truly said that Indian art has been called “a mirror of Indian civilization”, and so it has always been.

## METHODOLOGY

History is a meaningful record of human achievement. It is not merely a list of chronological events but a truthful integrated summary of the various events, times, places and person and their relationship. Historical research is a method to understand the past and to try to understand the present in the light of past events and developments. I used this method to direct myself towards an idea, a movement, or an institution. To observe history, we need to acquaint ourselves with all such past incidents and happenings because none of them can be considered or understood in isolation. There are of course certain problems and limitations which even I had to face like other researchers. Because of the fact that past events and incidents did not occur as planned, because of so many uncontrolled factors, the historian of course cannot usually generalize on the basis of those previously occurred events. Most of the times the dated or incidents become doubtful because the historian has to depend on the reported observations of others, no one knows whether authentic or not. Going through history is like a complicated puzzle with many of the parts missing. On the basis of these incomplete evidences, the historian makes full efforts fill the gaps but still those gaps are at times not filled up to our expectations. The historian also cannot control the conditions of observation nor can manipulate the significant variables. Thus, the result of

all these problems is often conflicting and complicated. But on the contrary the history as recorded by the historians has certain characteristics of scientific research activity also. The historian I feel delimits a problem, formulates hypotheses, or raises questions to be answered, gathers the primary data, tests the hypotheses inconsistent with the evidences and formulates generalizations or conclusions. Although the historian may not have witnessed an event or gathered data directly, he or she may have observed and gathered the information from different vantage points. But still the historian rigorously subjects the evidence to critical analysis in order to establish its authenticity, truthfulness, or accuracy. So, we as researchers need to depend on the conclusions made by the historians and their observations to the maximum. For the information and observations and for recording the incidents in the past I had to depend primarily on primary sources and secondary sources of data available around me. Primary sources of data included the documents, actual witnesses, or even the recorded events by other witnesses. Collection of data from these sources required a lot of logic, persistence, and common sense. The secondary sources included most of the history textbooks and encyclopedias or chapters. The secondary sources of data are usually of Limited worth because of the errors that may result when information passes from one person to another. Another method of collection of data and understanding the concepts was the review of related literature. I had to go through the existing literature in order to acquaint myself with the available stores of knowledge in my area of study. The review of the Literature helped me to bring clarity and focus to my research problem, and broadened the knowledge base in that area. For this I ensured to widely read around the subject area and to understand the findings and methods of other researchers. An important reason for studying the literature is that it helps me to understand how the findings of my study fit into the existing body of knowledge. Books being a central part of knowledge proved to be very effective and advantageous. It is also because the material published in the book is usually of good quality and the findings are “integrated with other research to form a coherent body of knowledge”. On the other hand, journals provided me the most updated information. For this purpose, I selected as many old journals as I could possibly. Examining the literature can be a never-ending task, but since there is limited time so I headed to set parameters by reviewing

the literature in relation to some main themes related to my topic. Thus, the information obtained from different books and journals was sorted under the main theme and theories. Thus, historical research and review of the related literature is a continuous process which begins before a research problem is finalized and continues until the report or research is reached to a conclusion. The literature review brought clarity and focus to many Research problem, improved my methodology and broadened my knowledge base.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ancient Indian sculptors displayed the entire Panorama of life in varied compositions. They touched upon the vital point concerning human life and thought. The world for them was a combination of delight and sorrow, with its natural beauty and grandeur and the art relics and sculptural remains boldly portray this idea to the world. Indian arts are displayed with vitality at their best. Though the Indian art was overtly religious but from literary references and the characteristic of the surviving arts we can feel the existence of a correspondingly large quantity of secular sculpture and painting. Though the subjects of Indian art are usually derived from episodes of great classic Myths and legends, the artists utilized their works in a special way. The members of the society could live out the true patterns suited and appropriate to their caste and social class and status. Every society or group of people in all the times have developed a distinct style of dress, ornamentation, and coiffure, matching their needs and means and interests. The terracotta's of shunga era (second first century BC) recovered from different parts of Bengal such as Tamluk, Chandraketugarh, India and Mahasthangarhin Bangladesh, clearly indicate the presence of a prosperous society with a rich pattern in clothing and tradition of jewelry. Though a large number of figures and plaques depict divinities and semi divinities such as yakshas, yakshinis, Gandharvas or Apsara, all of them are regal figures as well as ordinary members of the society in the form of attendants. In the depiction of all these compositions the artists have portrayed individuals in their contemporary dress and in their own surroundings. It may be confidently said that, whether the figures represented divinities or not they clearly indicate that both males and females from all the walks of life they used various articles of clothing and headdresses covering the body is which also belonged to the culture and style of common man.

In society, clothing and ornament always played an important role and function. It is certain that every individual stroves as far as he can to present and play his elegant social status. The figures in art represented ideal versions of divine persons and their dress. Even today the Indians tend to adorn their wives with their wealth. The clothes and ornaments worn by Indian wife bring honor to both. The role of clothing and ornaments is to realize visibly the term "opulence" which means "displaying wealth". And this is exactly what the art of India have always set out to do: to express the Inner feeling of wealth, fullness, and fertility, raising its status towards the divine. The very techniques of sculpture reflect this idea; for they deliberately create the bodies of their gorgeously ornamented figures Out of total convexities, smooth and graceful to the hand and eye. All the ancient visual arts have been deeply related with this original Indian feeling for form and its inner feeling and symbolism.

The earliest art in India has turned successful in treating the drapery of both men and women in an elegant manner. The dress of men consisted of a loincloth worn so as to resemble trousers forming the proper garment. Upper part of the body actually bare and only a shawl like cloth is depicted to cover the shoulders in various ways. This upper garment has always been a heroic costume. The women of the sculptured art of older period are seen clothed in the loin- cloth only, but their ornaments and headdresses being all the more attractive and elegant. The long loincloth, reaching to the ankles, is treated as transparent something revealing all the contours of the body, the garment visible only over the ankles and between the legs. The upper part of the body is always uncovered: this light kind of dress is still to be found in the south of modern India. On several reliefs the women appeared without any garment but a narrow loin- cloth, the ornamented girdle, head, arm, and leg ornaments being all the more extravagant and exclusive. It was noteworthy that from the nature of the garments, the hips, and not the breast and upper part of the body becomes the fixed point starting from which the figure was composed. An artistic feature which made the figures rhythmic and balanced is the prominence of one hip covered with rich hip chains and girdles. The figure being represented with one foot firmly planted while the other, bent or in the act of stepping forward, is almost entirely relief of burden. This beauty device is of very ancient standing figures in Indian art, usually seen in female ones. Owing to the

simplicity of the religious ideas of the people at the time, figures required by Buddhist art for the representation of the subject referred to, are few in number and represent divinities of a low order demons and beings half divine for Buddhism had taken root chiefly among the masses and everywhere employed the speech of the people in general. According to their teaching All the above-mentioned beings are mortal. Even the Gods owe their positions to their Virtuous actions in previous existences, and appear throughout as believing promoters of the religion of the “vanquisher”.

History of Indian costume in the Maurya, Sunga and Early Andhra period can be traced from sculptures, terracottas and partly from literature. The materials employed for the manufacture of cloth were cotton, silk wool, fiber etc. The dress was simple dhoti or loincloth fastened to the waist with kamarband generally tied in bow shaped knot with a patka at time hanging in between the legs, dupatta, or turban. It is remarkable that dhoti in later Maurya and Sungaperiods is very beautifully pleated, and the patkas are decorated with beautiful patterns, tassels etc. The women also wear saree with kamarband and patkas and elaborate veils. In fact, the few Maurya sculptures and bas-reliefs of Bharhutdepict a fashionable society where even simple garments were worn in such a way as to attract attention.

History of Indian costume is ample in the Gandhara and Mathura sculptures in the north and the relief of Amravati, Nagarjunakonda etc. in the south. Besides the typical Indian costume sewn garments, such as tunic, trousers of Central Asiatic and Iranian origin, were also worn. Cotton, silk, Chinese silk, Mulberry silk were the different varieties of cloth used for the various garments. Woolen cloth, mixed fabrics of wool, beautiful shawls of Kashmir woven from the wool of the shawl goat elicited the admiration of all. In the Gandhara sculptures of Northwest India the men generally wore dhoti, dupatta, and turban, and also tunic, trousers and cap, the princes wore a long dhoti and Chadar rolled and thrown back in stiff folds. The female costumes as represented in the Gandhara sculptures consists of three pieces, a sleeved tunic, a sort of petticoat and a shawl. The shirt generally reached to the knees. The sari is worn in two ways, firstly one part is wrapped round the waist and the other pleated and tucked in behind and secondly one part is wrapped round the waist and the free end thrown over the shoulders. In south India, men, as depicted in the reliefs of Amravati, Nagarjunakonda, wear a small loin-cloth

reaching above the ankles and tucked in many ways. The kamarband is worn in several ways. The head dresses are of various patterns. There is the turban with, a plaque, carelessly round turbans, caps etc. The women generally wear short saris held with girdles. The women were fond of hairdressing, and sometimes in sculptures they wear tiaras, crowns, and veils.

The accounts of Chinese travelers and archeological evidences of paintings and sculptures have been the source of information even for the golden age of Gupta under the great political achievements of rulers like Samudragupta, Chandragupta and Sriharsa. These evidences are a treasure house of manners and customs, of the luxurious life which the kings and nobles led and even of the elegant costumes of the people in those times. The many sculptures and paintings of Ajanta illustrate the ample costumes. The Gupta Period shows conventionalization and idealization in the style of costumes and jewellery. The minute details of the costumes are at times not ignored. Many such sculptures portray necklaces made of dinara, a coin introduced in the Kushana Period. The materials of the costumes and textiles are of varied nature. Various types of textiles manufactured from bark fibers, linen, silk, wool and goats hair are defined. Various types of sewn garments are also visible most of the times. Names for sewn garments of the women such as cola, candataka, etc. are also mentioned. Sewn garments were extensively used. Most female sleeves have been clad in sewn garments made after the style of the countries from which they have come. Gupta kings often wore tunics, trousers, and high boots after the fashion of the Kushana Kings, and most of the times they are also represented wearing dhoti, dupata and turban in combination with tunics and kamarband. The women wore Sari, bodice, tunic, cadar. At times women are also shown in skirt, a common dress of Indians a dhoti and dupatta. Ajanta paintings have significantly shown the costumes of people of all classes. Commonly the kings at Ajanta Wore dhoti and highly ornamented head dresses but sewn garments were not tabooed. The nobles and princes usually copied the dress material and style of the costumes as those of the kings. The ministers wore long tunics. The soldiers wore either a dhoti or clad in tunic, trousers, head scarves and high boots. The royal attendants wore tunics and boots or purely Indian costumes. The queens and the women of higher social status wore light garments consisting of saris, skirts, and scarves, also tunics with half sleeves or full

sleeves. The costumes of the female attendants definitely show a great variety of costumes one section of the female attendants have been shown wearing tunics and caps and other section of females are clad in purely Indian costumes. The dancing girls are also shown wearing tunics, sometimes also with an apron like garment wrapped around the waist and also trousers. The foreign influence is witnessed in this period. It is supported by the various foreign types as appearing at Ajanta. One type is a tunic with a v- shaped opening at the neck, lightly embroidered at the cuffs, collar and arms and dome shaped caps. Their beads, bushy eyebrows and straight features recall the features of Iranians or Central Asians. From such representations we can examine and believe in the extraordinarily high standard of skill and invention of weavers and dyers, of gold and silver smiths, and carvers of wood and ivory. The decorative panels of Ajanta display superb jewellery pieces adorned with curvilinear floral designs. Indian ornaments are seen in great number throughout the art of Ajanta especially necklaces, hip girdles, armlets and anklets in repetition and multiplicity. Individual stones included semi-precious and decorative stones, were not cut in identical shapes or sizes to show wide variety and range of jewellery pieces. Designs on the fabrics included stripes and curling floral patterns, also tie and dye and embroidery.

The art of sculpture and paintings was a pictorial script through which the masses received education and information in religions, subjects and became familiar with the symbolism and truth of their faith. The sculptures displayed dignity tempered by innate goodness and sweetness on the faces of all human Gods and Goddesses and other deities. The symbolism added a rare touch of naturalism to each figure. The masterpieces are great in artistic execution and in their expression of power and mood of each period or age the smooth lines given to the images in all ancient art are firm and undaunted with an unconquerable vigour. Nothing modern in this country can surpass the elemental and symbolic strength in the arts of ancient India. Every form and line speaks of cosmic power. The body poised in might, feet planted in self-confidence and the most surprising is the confidence with which the sculptors have transformed stone into life with eloquent grandeur.

### Conclusion:

Therefore, the idea of ancient art of India is to represent the range of an immense artistic sphere in all

types of compositions whether in sculpture or painting. From the Maruyanto the 6<sup>th</sup> century Indian appears a great centre of artistic creative activity. This extraordinary blossoming reveals nearly all the traditional Hindu deities and the evidence of the Jaina and Buddhist traditions which appear to be deeply rooted. Indian artists worked on formative ideas in the spheres of art and iconography. They worked for a higher level and through their intellectual consciousness they could perform all forms of activities. They could easily establish a harmony between art and thought between the outer form and the inner spirit. The art is a happy and successful combination of the solid dignity with the restrained grace and inner spiritualism. In every figure we find the sensuousness retained by a moral sense especially in the female figures. The extravagant use of ornaments and the extensive use of draperies exhibit the charm of flesh which is an instrument used to enhance their loveliness highlighting the needs of higher life. The fashions and fancies seen in these sculptures all through the ages bespeak of a highly sophisticated sense of personal decoration and of the society as a whole in its true sense. The importance of human figure and preference for a youthful form has been the greatest attraction all over the ancient Indian ages. The artist aimed at representing a disciplined body and a conquered mind which is seen not only in the images of divine beings such as Buddha, Jaina and Brahman deities but also in the images of ordinary men and women.

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