CHAPTER VIII

COSTUME, ORNAMENT AND COIFFURE
CHAPTER VIII
COSTUME, ORNAMENT AND COIFFURE

Wearing of various types of costumes and ornaments has been an enduring passion of the women in all ages throughout the world since man developed an aptitude for the same. The women of Orissa are no exception to it. In all ages they have shown a special taste for befitting costumes and a variety of ornaments. The sculptures of the period under review depict the costumes and ornaments used by the women of Orissa.

The early reliefs give an account of the life which existed when they were carved by depicting the contemporary dress and ornaments of both men and women. The sculptures clearly indicate that the normal attire of the men was an adhovasana (lower garment) and an uttariya (upper garment). The lower garment was fastened round the waist just like a dhoti of the present times. The sculptures reveal that rich people used different types of girdles probably made of gold and studded with precious stones and pearls for fastening the lower cloth round the waist which reached down a little below the knee. The uttariya

---


* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 28.
which was worn only by the rich people and divinity was draped over the left shoulder and under the right arm. The sculptures represented the common people only with the adhivasana. And the dress of the women was almost the same as that of the men. The women were an antariya (a lower garment) which reached down only below the knees. The upper portion of the body above the waist was left completely bare except for the various ornaments, but they used scarves on ceremonial occasions. The queen found in the sculpture of Manchapuri Gumpha, wore a long saññi tucked near the waist in several folds which covered the entire lower part of the body. A portion of the saññi, hangs in front down to her feet. The upper garment covering the major part of the body passes through both the shoulders to the back.

The upper portion of the body above the waist was left bare in the Nayika figures and dancing girls depicted in the temple walls as decorative motifs. It appears that only lower class ladies as well as professional dancers and musicians used the adhivasana as their costume. As "the women in ancient India", writes A. L. Basham "were considerably restricted in their activities, and a high standard of modesty was demanded of those of the higher

* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 29.
** Ibid, Fig. No. 15.
classes; but it is clear that their ideas of propriety in dress were very different from those of their descendants.

It seems that the breasts were covered with a thin transparent cloth hardly visible to the common men. During the period under discussion the exposition of the breasts in the sculptures was not considered vulgar on the part of the women. The then society never objected to the same. The exposure of the breast was an artistic convention of the ancient and early medieval India. In the words of A. S. Altekar, the real explanation of women appearing without their bust being properly covered in the sculptures and paintings of India, seems to be the artistic convention of the age. Breasts are the most significant symbol of motherhood and the artist probably feels that they may be shown uncovered in the works of art, though they may be normally concealed in actual life under a bodice or a portion of the sari. He thinks that this convention "facilitated the task of fully exhibiting the beauty of the female form without suggesting any indecency and also gave the artist an opportunity to reveal different ornaments worn on the chest."

---

4 Ibid., p.345.
The last frieze of the lower storey of the Rani-gumpha depicts the women having veils on their head. Yet their faces were not covered. The head of a dancing girl depicted in its right wing was found covered with a flowing veil. A female figure in the Jaya-Vijaya cave wears a drapery. The Nagis figures of the early Christian era were found clad in loose skirt and bodice. Thus in the remote past they used simple clothes, very few in number.

In the later period, that is towards the 9th century A.D. and onwards, women wore antariya (a lower garment) and uttariya (an upper garment). The Mahabharata of Sarala Dasa makes reference to the use of sadhi and an upper cloth known as uparana by the women. The sari was wrapped round the waist, passing between the legs and tucked in the back. The sadhi was generally put in such a way that it sometimes fell gracefully behind the left leg generally reaching down to the ankle. A girdle was put round the waist to secure the sadhi.

The women wore a Kanchuka (bodice) with strings on


6 Das, B. The Bhaumakaras and Their Times, (New Delhi, 1978), plate Female Dress.

* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 30.
both sides tied at the back. Sometimes women wore a rolled scarf which had both its ends thrown on the back. The dancing girls put on a tight-fitting tunic reaching down to the ankle. They also used a long scarf which was thrown loosely over the shoulder in the back so that the scarf fluttered during the dance. The sculptures depict female figures putting on embroidered antariya as well as uttarīya.

Available materials, although scanty, reveal that both the upper and lower classes in the society used almost the same materials of dress. The mode of wearing the dress too was the same. Women, it seems, used silk as well as cotton materials as their attire. Kalinga had been one of the most important centres of textile industry since the time of the Mauryas like Magadha, Mathura, Bengal, Kamarupa, Kasi, Vatsa, Mahisa of that time. While mentioning the origin of the fabrics used in the royal family, Manasollasa referred to Kalinga along with other places. It appears that cloth of a high quality had been produced in Orissa since the time of Kauṭilya, Parvati and Kartikeya, the side deities in the

---

7 Majumādar, B. C., Orissa in the Making (Calcutta, 1925), p.46.
Arthasastra, Vol. II, 2

8 Manasollāsa, Ch. III, 1017-20.
Lingaraj temple at Bhubaneswar, corroborate this fact. The Parīchhāna of both Parvati and Kartikeya as depicted there are of a very fine variety with beautiful designs. R. L. Mitra while referring to these fine clothes remarks that "in neatness, elegance and richness of design and execution, it is in no way inferior to the finest production of the Benaras loom of the present day." The upper garment of the women was found decorated with beautiful designs of a high standard with pearls and bead linings. It is not possible to distinguish the materials used by the rich and the common people from the sculptures. However, the higher class women very likely used finer as well as costly silk materials which were sometimes imported from China, whereas the lower class women wore less costly cotton materials of a simple variety. Manasollas further reveals that Chinamsuka, i.e., Chinese silk garment, was manufactured in China and was imported to India. As Orissa had cultural and commercial relations with China there was every possibility of the Chinese silk being imported by the royal households. Silk garments known as

---

10 Purusottama Mahatmya, XXXIII, 27.
11 Mānasollāsa, III, 257, 394.
dukula and Kausika were two of the items presented by the Kalingas to the Pandavas. The Baloda and Rajim plates of Tivaradeva corroborate the fact that poor people used cotton cloth. The sculptures also give an idea of the mode of weaving and embroidering cloth. Thus the costumes used by the women were few as well as very simple.

Ornaments played a very important role in the socio-economic and cultural life of the people of India. Indians have a special love for fine ornaments. S. Sulaiman mentions that Indians, both male and female, decorated themselves with different types of ornaments. Even in the remote past when they used a plain attire they used many beautiful and complex ornaments. Both men and women of Orissa used to adorn themselves from head to foot with appropriate ornaments made of gold and silver, studded


15 CII, Vol. III, p.29, 1.15.


with precious stones for personal adornments. With the change of fashions and aptitudes the use of ornaments also changed from time to time. In the Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves of Bhubaneswar both male and female figures are seen wearing bejewelled tiaras, dangling earrings, heavy bracelets, broad necklaces and beautiful anklets. Varieties of these ornaments made of terracotta, ivory, bone, copper and lead are found at Sisupalgarh. The sculptures of Vaitala, Rajarani, Lingaraj, Mukteswara and Chaurasi Yogini temples at Bhubaneswar give a vivid representation of the various ornaments worn by both men and women of the respective periods, some of those being Keyūra, Kankana, Valaya, ratnahāra mekhalā, Kundala, Angada, Nūpura etc. All these ornaments have been in use from the remote antiquity, only variations in their names and designs are found in different localities.

Kings as well as the divinities used crowns of different shapes on their heads. A number of inscriptions refer to the use of crowns (mukuta and Kirita) made of

19 AI, No.5, p.89.
* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 31.
precious metals and stones on their heads. These crowns were of various designs. While some were conical in shape, others were vertical in design with a crest-jewel at the centre. Still another variety of crown is called Jatamukuta. Women of the Somavamsi period (9th to 11th century A.D.) wore jewelled ornaments on their foreheads just below the hairline. We also get a lot of sculptural evidence of the use of golden fillets in the hair during the different periods.

Different types of earrings were used by both men and women, such as the Kundala which hung down from the ear lobes, and studs and big rounded ear-rings found fixed on their ear lobes or hanging from them by means of hooks. These earrings were called "kana", karnaphula etc. These ear ornaments are of different designs such as flowers, coiled trees, leaves, shape of a disc or a crescent. Sculptures of the Vaitala temple at Bhubaneswar depict beautiful designs of ear-ornaments. One angel wears an ear ornament resembling a flower whereas another wears an ear ornament of the shape of a bud below which hangs a sunflower.

---

21 Misra, B., Orissa Under the Bhauma Kings, (Calcutta, 1934), pp.37, 43, 47, 55.
22 Rath, B. K., Cultural History of Orissa, (Delhi, 1983), p.128.
* Vide Appendix, Fig. Nos. 23, 29 and 30.
The ladies used various kinds of necklaces, broadly of two varieties, short and long. The short ones are tightly tied to the neck and the long ones run down to the chest with a pendant or locket in the centre. Gold necklaces studded with precious stones were known as *ratnahāras*. Chandrahāra were worn by the women which covered a good portion of the chest and hung down between the breasts.

A number of inscriptions of the Ganga period refer to necklaces made of three strings studded with pearls. Composed of five strings made of pearls with a pendant in the centre and made of one string of pearls. Women also used 'Sapatasarimoti' (Seven strings of pearls with one *Māṇikya* in the middle), *Nilamanihāra* (a necklace made of sapphire), 'Cāpasari' (a collar ornament worn round the neck), 'veka gotiā mukta maṇi mālā' (consisting of pearls and jewels, strung on silk threads with one pendant in the middle, and 'Dasari Sunāsuta' (two golden strings with one pearl in the middle). Kāmamālī or necklaces made of glass were also used. Another old ornament 'sate sari' was used in

* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 19.

24 SII, Vol. VI, No. 983.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., Vol. V., Nos. 1189, 1227.

27 Sahu, Dr. K. C., Literature and Social Life in Medieval Orissa, (Ranchi 1971), p. 94.

28 Bhanja, U., Lāvanyavati, (Prachi, Oriya), p. 27.
Orissa and Bengal. Inscriptions also refer to necklaces consisting of different types of gems strung together and consisting of small beads of gold strung together.

The sculptures of ancient as well as medieval Orissa do not depict any nose ornament in the female figures. C.V. Vaidya and G. H. Ojha opine that the Indians used nose ornaments mainly as a result of Muslim influence. Since Orissa was not affected by the Muslim invasion till the thirteenth century A.D. the nose ornament was not used by the women of Orissa till the Gajapati period. A. L. Basham mentions that in course of time it became so important that without it an Indian woman of olden generations felt positively undressed. In Orissa the use of nose-ring finds mention for the first time in the Mahabharata of Sarala Dasa. He has referred to it as "ratnaphula". Varieties of nose-rings came to be used in

29 Sarala Mahabharata, Madhya, p.50.
30 Dasgupta, Aspects of Bengali Society, p.53.
31 SII, Vol. VI, No.842.
32 Ibid., Vol. V, Nos. 1189, 1227.
34 Ojha, G. H., Madhyakalina Bharatiya Samskrti (Hindi), Allahabad, 1928), p.40.
35 JASB (N.S.),XXIII, 1923, pp.288-296.
38 Sarala Mahabharata, Adi, p.251.
Orissa such as "Naka Chana", "Basani", "Besara" and "Tilphul". "Nalaka" and "Dandi" too were used in the nose. Basani is like a bud of Oleander (Karnikar). It was studded with five pearls and looked like a bright group of stars under the cloud in the month of Kartika.

Women also used ornaments in their arms such as 'Tada', Bajrasenha, Bihuti, Sikali and Daunriá. Tada was used by both men and women and Bajrasenha was used during the time of war by the soldiers to protect their arms against the arrows and swords of the enemies.

Khadu, one of the popular ornaments, was used in Orissa both by men and women on their hands and also on their legs. They used "Mekhalá" (a highly decorative golden belt) in their wrists. Both men and women used bracelets and bangles made of metals and usually heavy. Women

---

39 Jagamohana Ramayana, Uttara, pp.83, and 117.
40 Ibid., p.177.
42 Sarala Mahabharata Sabha, p.79.
43 Das, D., Rasakallola (Cuttack, 1974), III, Canto, p.46.
44 Ibid., p.10.
45 Ibid.
46 Consisting of series of amulets strung together
48 Jagamohana Ramayana, Adi, M.S., p.300A.
used a number of bangles and bracelets in one hand. There was no hard and fast rule to restrict the wearing of bangles in one hand to a limited number. Bangles and bracelets worn by women in the sculptures of the Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves are few in number whereas the women sculptures of Bhubaneswar temples are found wearing large numbers of them.

Women also wore ornaments in their waist such as Gajamati Jhara (a chain made of Gajamoti), kāncīmālā (a chain for the waist with tinkling bells) and Ratna sāri (a chain of jewels). This girdle is the most beautiful ornament of the waist in ancient and medieval periods. It was used by both the sexes not only as a decorative ornament but also as a belt to tie the undergarments round the waist. The girdles found in the sculptures of Vaitala temple and Lingaraj temple are not ornamental in design. Beautiful girdles with double chords and decorative bands are noticed in the Sun Temple at Konark. A large number of epigraphic records of Orissa mention the use of girdles.

A number of inscriptions reveal that foot ornaments

49 Jagamohana Ramayana, Adi, M. S., p.300A.
* Vide Appendix, Fig. Nos. 15 and 17.
** Ibid., Fig. Nos. 28 and 31.
were favourite among the women of different periods in Orissa. They used Pāhuda, Mūpura and Bala in their feet. Mudi and Jhuntiā were also used in the second fingers of their feet. A bronze image of a woman of the 10th century A.D. discovered from Banpur, is seen fastening her anklet. A woman in Rajarani temple and another woman in Lingaraj temple are noticed taking out their anklets whereas a woman is seen fastening her anklet in the sun temple at Konarak.

Women of the upper and middle classes of the society used ornaments made of gold and silver studded with precious jewels. The women of the poor classes too used ornaments made of cheap materials like brass, nickel, iron, copper and glass which clearly indicates vast economic differences prevailing between the rich and the poor of Orissa. The Naisadhiya-charita refers to the use of brass ornaments by the poor people. The custom is even now prevalent in many parts of Orissa. The various ornaments testified to a high degree of skill attained by jewellers. Thus, the manufacture of jewellery was one of the most flourishing industries of the period in Orissa.

   IHQ, Vol. XXI, p.221.

52 Mahapatra, K. N., Des. Cat. of Sanskrit, Ms, p.XIX, Canto 9, Verse 28.
Arrangement of hair by both the sexes seems to be a luxurious fashion of the period. During the earlier part men and women preferred to have varieties of hair decorations as testified by the sculptures of Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves. Both the sexes preferred to have long hairs. They combed their hair backwards and tied it into a chignon, with curled locks in the front or either side. These two knots were generally made vertically above the head. In rare cases the hair was tied into three knots over the head. Out of the three, the central knot was more highly decorated than the other two side ones.

The hair of the ladies was sometimes gathered on the top of the head and tied in a piece of cloth. Sometimes the ladies gathered their hair tied to a side in several designs. Ladies too made plaits of various patterns with the fillets. When the ladies gathered their hairs at the top, a band of ringlets or curled locks of hair decorated the forehead. In rare cases hair-dressing was found in the shape of a wig with plaits falling down over the shoulders. The ringlets of hair often fell down to the top most part of the ears. Varieties of hair style are found in the sculptures of Orissa. Sometimes the hair was

arranged in ringlets which fell to either side of the head. In some cases the hair was just combed backward and the end of the hair was tied in a knot. In other cases the hair was combed behind but a few locks of hair were found in the forehead. The hair was also arranged at the top in a roundish bun. It was also plaited in a single pigtail and put at the back. In this connection R. L. Mitra mentions that the hair was tied in a knot or kept in the shape of a spiral at the top, dragged to a side and made to rest on a shoulder. Similarly N. K. Sahu refers to another form of hair-style. It was to comb the hair towards the top and tie it in the middle leaving two bunches on either side.

A number of sculptural evidences depicting the various hair-dos of the women suggest that Orissan women had become conscious of their coiffures. Innumerable feminine hair styles carved by the gifted artists and depicted in the Lingaraja, Mukteswar, Rajarani and Brahmesvara temples of Bhubaneswar testify to the ornamental, beautiful and impressive hairdo of the females. Sometimes

---

* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 19.

** Ibid., Fig. Nos. 20, 22, 25 and 26.
women divided their hair into two parts in the centre and made it in a decorative hair style at the back of the head. Generally they combed the hair towards the back and arranged it into round or loosely tied judā above the neck. To make the judā impressive they used a decorative hair-pin made of either precious metal, ivory or sandal wood. Sometimes the ladies loosely kept the hair at the back in the shape of a wave. The dancers used to have a different hair dressing in which the hair-locks were shown dropping towards the forehead in beautiful decorative curls. In some cases these curled locks reached down to the ears and the cheeks. To decorate the coiffures the ladies used beautifully designed precious ornaments and pearl strings. R. L. Mitra is of the opinion that in all the hair styles a beautiful band of pearl strings was tied between the forehead and hair-locks as a line of demarcation. Below the pearl strings in some cases unmanageable hair of the forehead was set in dignified small curls. The women of the Ganga period decorated their coiffure with flowers made of gold. The precious golden ornaments and pearl strings were used in decorating

* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 32.
** Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 18.
the hair-style by the rich and noble class women. The ordinary women folk tied their hair into simple chignons and did not use any fillets as they could not afford them. Charles Fabri opines that the different types of hair setting of ladies can be found at a single place, from the Yogini sculptures of Hirapur near Bhubaneswar where each sculpture has been depicted with a different hair-style. These sculptures testify to the excellence attained on various types of female hair setting.

The women from the very ancient times used different cosmetics for enhancing their beauty and grace. Various epigraphic and literary records testify to the fact that women-folk applied vermillion (Sindūra) or Kumkuma on their foreheads coloured their lips with red-dye (yavaka) and their feet with lac-dye (alaktaka). The Nayika sculptures from various temples reveal that the women hold the mirror with their left hands and apply vermillion or Kumkuma on their foreheads with their right hands.

The Baloda and Rajim plates of Tivaradeva make references

---

60 Fabri, C., The History of the Art of Orissa, (Calcutta, 1974), pp.74-101 and plates IXIII to IXXV.
61 Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 19.
62 Naisadha Charita, XVI, p.71.
Sarala Mahabharata, Adiparva, p.18.
63 Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 33.
62 EI, Vol. VII, p.102, 1.16.
to mirrors. The women also decorated their cheeks with figures of leaves (patrānkura). They used collyrium (kajala) to decorate their eyes. They also decorated their cheeks with musks and saffron marks. They used gorachanā for applying tilaka marks on the forehead, lac (lāksā) for the purpose of dyeing was probably used in Orissa as in other parts of contemporary India. The epigraphic records testify to the use of perfumes by women for making them more impressive. During the Gajapati rule women applied sandal paste to their body and scented oil to their hair. They also used to colour their teeth and paint their breasts. Sri Harsa mentions that women grew long nails. In medieval Orissa dyeing the nails was a popular fashion with women.

66 Collyrium was prepared from the soot of a lamp collected by a vessel.
67 Ibid., pp.29-37.
70 Sarala Mahābhārata, Virataparva, p.184; Vanaparva, p.284.
71 Agama Samksipta Sara, ‘Orissa State Museum Library, Catalogue No. T-1/A.
72 Naisadha Charita, Vol. XII, p.75.
Thus the women of Orissa of the very ancient as well as the medieval periods were very careful in putting on various types of costumes, wearing varieties of ornaments, and arranging their hair in different styles. They were accustomed to the use of different kinds of cosmetics for enhancing their beauty as well as grace. In no way were they inferior to modern ladies in this regard.