

SOUTH ASIAN FOLKLORE

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA

AFGHANISTAN | BANGLADESH | INDIA | NEPAL | PAKISTAN | SRI LANKA

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BEADS

The songs are also often composed in an ambiguous style in order to hide their ritual significance from the uninitiated. But no matter what the subject, the striking, evocative imagery of Bāul songs, their humor, and their catchy tunes give them wide appeal.

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CAROL SALOMON

SEE ALSO

Bhāṭiyāli Song; Lalan Fakir; Song, Bengali; Syncretism

BEADS

Beads and pendants are important forms of ornament that have a very long history in the subcontinent. The earliest beads were made from natural marine shells, bone and antler, and possibly ostrich egg shell. These date from the Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods, from eight thousand to more than eleven thousand years

ago. Stone beads are documented extensively throughout the subcontinent beginning in the Neolithic period (around 7000 B.C.E.) and continuing through later periods up to the present.

The earliest stone beads are made from soft stone, such as limestone and soapstone, but by the early Chalcolithic period (4500 B.C.E.), we see the drilling and polishing of harder stones such as carnelian, banded agates, and jasper. During the Indus Valley civilization (2600–1900 B.C.E.), special lapidary techniques were developed to produce exquisite long carnelian beads that were exported to the surrounding regions of Central Asia, the Gulf region, and even as far as Mesopotamia. The Indus artisans produced many different styles of beads ranging in size from seventy millimeters in length to tiny beads of steatite (soapstone), measuring one millimeter in length and diameter. Special coloring techniques were developed to make permanent designs on beads, especially white designs on red carnelian. Beads of carnelian, lapis lazuli, turquoise, and copper were worn at the waist, the throat, and on the wrist. Tapered cylindrical amulets made of black stone or greenish colored stone have been found in association with female burials with shell bangles, and may have been a form of ornament worn by married women during the Indus period.

During the Early Historic period (beginning around 600 B.C.E.), the technique of coloring stone beads continued to be used, and a new technique of making white designs on beads that were blackened also appears. These beads, with white on red or white on black designs, became widespread during the early Hindu and Buddhist period (300 B.C.E. to 300 C.E.) and were traded as far as Southeast Asia and Tibet.

While many beads from prehistoric times may have been made from wood or seeds, these materials are preserved only at later dates. The sacred *tulsi* or basil wood is used to make beads worn by certain Hindu sects. A wide variety of sacred seeds, particularly the *rudraksha* (literally, “eye of Rudra,” who is the god more commonly known as Śiva; *Elaeocarpus ganitrus*), are worn singly as amulets. Strands of beads made of sacred wood, seeds, or stone are used as prayer beads by all of the major religious sects of the subcontinent. Rock crystal and carnelian are the most popular stones, but amber, sandalwood, and a variety of other sacred materials are also used.

Beads of various materials are used as protective amulets, combined with gold or silver, or strung on cotton or silk thread. Married women among many Hindu communities wear a necklace (*mangal sutra*) that combines black glass beads with silver or gold beads. Men from many different communities wear agate, rock crystal, or garnet beads as protective amulets. Most

communities of the subcontinent wear pendants made from stone or metal as protective amulets as well as for ornamentation. Many of these amulets are hollow and filled with sacred objects or written texts that protect the bearer.

Since antiquity, beads made in the subcontinent were traded to all parts of the known world and, even today, workshops in Khambhat (Gujarat) and Jaipur (Rajasthan) produce a wide variety of beads in semi-precious and precious stones for export to markets in Japan, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Glass beads, many of which are imitations of popular beads made in other regions of the world, are produced near Delhi or in South India.

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JONATHAN MARK KENOYER

SEE ALSO

Glass; Jewelry and Adornment; Tibet; Tulsi (Basil)

BENFEY, THEODOR

Theodor Benfey (1809–1881) was a philologist and Sanskrit grammarian who taught at the University of Göttingen in Germany. His publications span dictionaries of Greek and Sanskrit, a Sanskrit grammar, and numerous translations of classical Indian texts. Benfey is known in folkloristic circles for his German translation of the *Pañcatantra*, possibly the most important Indic text for comparative studies of story literature.

In his introduction to the translation, Benfey expounded a diffusionistic theory of story-theme migration. Benfey, like many of his predecessors, chose India as a wellspring for narratological research. Drawing on the work of Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838) and his students, he posited an Indic origin for the moral fable. His grand scheme included other genres such as *märchen*, which he also saw as originating in India. From there, he thought, the narrative genres diffused in many directions, ultimately reaching Europe via Africa and the Middle East. Because the *Pañcatantra* was such a pop-

ular source of entertainment and moral learning for Indians, Benfey supposed that this text—more than any other—could shed light on the mechanisms of diffusion.

Benfey saw a strong connection between the *Pañcatantra* and the Indo-Buddhist *Jātaka* tales, since both were educational, dealt with moral themes and parables, and made extensive use of animal characters. Possible Greek influence notwithstanding, Benfey was convinced that India must be the home of morality tales because the Indian populace was accustomed to the unique style of oral preaching put forth in the *Pañcatantra*. But he also admitted that writing played an important role in the dissemination of this corpus of stories. As India came into greater contact with Islamic and other cultures, Benfey argued, the oral mode of storytelling waned in importance. Thus, the Indian fables found new homes, carried in translated forms to numerous countries by traders, warriors, and monks.

Benfey's contribution to comparative studies cannot be underestimated, for scholars in many disciplines have commented extensively on his theory. Most important among these in the field of folklore studies was Emmanuel Cosquin (1841–1921), a collector of French folklore who went even further than Benfey by insisting that India was the indisputable home of all tales. Although he received much praise from his contemporaries, Benfey's ideas eventually came to be questioned by other European folklorists and philologists. In Russia, for example, proponents of the historical method utilized Benfey's insights, but a later revivalist, A. N. Veselovskii (1838–1906), eventually refuted Benfey's thesis in asserting that the flow of influence can never be simply unidirectional. Joseph Bédier (1864–1937) was, perhaps, Benfey's most vocal opponent, arguing for a more plausible theory of polygenesis, or multiple origins.

Today, Benfey is taken more seriously as an Indologist than as a folklorist, yet his contribution to folklore theory has left an indelible effect. Tales do, after all, migrate, and even though his notion of a single point of origin should not be taken literally, his other points concerning the interrelationship between orality and literacy, as well as the role of human agency in the process of transmission, are still central to the growth and vitality of the discipline. It is no wonder, then, that he is often referred to as the “father of the historical-comparative method.”

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F

FAIENCE

Various glassy or vitreous siliceous pastes and glazed terra-cottas, commonly referred to by archaeologists as "faience," are the earliest form of glazed materials to be produced in prehistory and continue to be used in South Asia to produce containers, beads, bangles, and glazed tiles. Blue-green or deep blue glazed faience ornaments, primarily beads, pendants, and bangles, are well known from the Indus Valley civilization (2600–1900 B.C.E.), but they were first produced in the preceding Early Harappan period (3300–2600 B.C.E.) and continued to be produced during the Late Harappan (1900–1300 B.C.E.) and Painted Grey Ware periods (1200–800 B.C.E.).

In order to produce bangles, the artisans of the Indus cities developed a special high-strength compact faience (vitreous paste) by carefully grinding and re-firing a colored frit (semi-vitrified quartz). The glazing was accomplished by including a flux in the paste so that after firing, the exterior was covered with a glassy surface and the interior was also strongly fused. The Indus faience bangles were colored with blue, blue-green, and white and decorated with multiple chevron designs. The white bangles were made to imitate shell bangles and had only a single chevron design. Faience beads, pendants, and gaming pieces were made with a larger range of colors, including blue, blue-green, azure, white, yellow, reddish-brown, brown, and black.

During the later periods, and even up to the present in Afghanistan, northern India, and Pakistan, a variation of faience technology has been used to produce beads, tiles, and vessels painted with blue and blue-green designs. In Herat and around Kabul in Afghanistan, glazed frit beads and pendants are still made using ancient techniques.

Glazed terra-cotta tiles and ceramic vessels are generally made with a terra-cotta body coated with a glaze

made of crushed frit or glass and colored with various minerals to make a limited range of colors: blue, blue-green, azure, brown, yellow, and black. The tiles and ceramic vessels are first fired (bisqued) and then coated with glazes using two different techniques. In one process, a colored glaze is applied; in a second, mineral pigments are painted on the surface of the bisqued vessel or tile, and these are then coated with a clear glaze. Throughout the subcontinent, glazed tiles are used primarily in Muslim architecture, but they are also used in Hindu and Sikh architecture.

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JONATHAN MARK KENOYER

SEE ALSO

Bangles; Beads; Glass; Pottery

FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

Fairs and festivals are enormously popular forms of celebration on the South Asian landscape. A festival (*utsava*) is usually a series of rituals and other activities commemorating a mythical event associated with a sacred figure or deity, and often occurring at significant seasonal or astronomical conjunctions. The festival is usually centered on a pilgrimage center, a temple, or a

Satya Pīr Sen, Dinesh Chandra; Song, Bengal; Synchronism; *Tabarrak*; *Urs*

BANGLES

The use of bangles or bracelets as a form of ornamentation is common throughout the world, but in South Asia bangles appear to have taken a specific role as a symbol of socioritual status and ethnic identity. The earliest bangles date to the Neolithic period (7000 B.C.E.) at the site of Mehrgarh, Pakistan. These were made from circlets of shell, or were composite bracelets made from beads of stone and shell. During the Indus Valley civilization (2600–1900 B.C.E.), we see a dramatic increase in the styles of bangles and the varieties of materials used to produce bangles. The range of materials includes shell, terra-cotta, stoneware, faience, alabaster, copper/bronze, and gold. Burials of adult women with shell bangles on the left arm are thought to represent the earliest use of bangles to define ethnic affiliation and possibly marital status. At present, among Hindu communities, women must remove or break their bangles at the death of their husbands, but women who die before their husbands are often cremated with the symbols of their married status, such as their red wedding sari, simple ornaments such as iron and lac bangles, an iron finger ring, or a necklace worn as a symbol of marriage, called the *mangal sutra* (auspicious thread). The *mangal sutra* is usually made of black glass beads alternating with gold or silver beads and is given to a woman during the wedding ceremony.

Green to blue-green glazed faience bangles were first made in the Indus cities and continued to be made in later periods until the development of glass technology during the Painted Grey Ware period (1100–800 B.C.E.). The early glass bangles were dark blue-green to black or yellowish brown. By the Early Historical period (600 B.C.E.) a wide variety of glass bangles were being produced, along with stone bangles made from agate and jasper.

During subsequent historical periods, bangles came to play an important role in ornamentation and for ritual purposes. In the Hindu traditions, women wear bangles to identify their marital status. Among contemporary Hindu communities, glass bangles are worn to mark important festivals or special social events. In some communities green glass bangles are worn as good luck for childbirth. Shell bangles are worn in many Bengali Hindu communities to represent the marital status of wives, to ensure the well-being of the family, and to ensure longevity of the husband. Ivory bangles are worn for the same general purpose in western India and Pakistan, and glass bangles are worn for these reasons throughout the subcontinent.



Women in a market look at the large bangle selection and decide which ones to buy. Karnataka, India. © Mimi Nichter

The styles of bangles not only signify ethnic affiliation, but also can be correlated to occupation and social status. In traditional communities, wide, heavy bangles made of ivory or shell that will not break easily are generally worn by women involved in heavy labor, while thin, delicate bangles made of the same materials are worn by elite women who do not engage in heavy manual labor.

In contrast to these more valuable materials, cheap and relatively fragile glass bangles are worn by women of all classes. Glass bangles are often broken intentionally to signify anger and sorrow, or simply to make room for a new set.

Bangles are also worn by men for functional as well as symbolic purposes. Among Sikh communities the man's iron bangle is worn as a religious symbol as well as a protection of the wrist in the course of battle. Holy men of both Hindu and Muslim sects wear specific types of bangles to identify their religious order or status and as protective amulets. Bangles made from gold or silver are worn by both sexes as a sign of wealth and status.

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SEE ALSO

Beads; Glass; Jewelry and Adornment; Material Culture

BĀRAHMĀSĀ

Literally “the twelve months,” *bārahmāsā* refers to a poetic and song genre known across northern India (in languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Rajasthani, Bhojpuri, and Panjabi). The *bārahmāsā* draws upon elements of both the climatic and cultural calendars of the area to tell a tale or to depict emotions. Each month and the relevant action/image associated with it are described in a line or perhaps in a stanza, depending upon the author. The primary focus is on the human year, as formed and mediated by the climatic year and its associated rituals and cultural events; the *bārahmāsā* explicates the progress of human beings through the psychological shoals of the annual cycle. *Bārahmāsā* focus especially on the imagery of extreme disjunctions, capturing the human moral and physical decline that occurs when the actions appropriate to a given month are left undone. A frequent image in *bārahmāsā* is the absence of one’s lover during the rainy season months of *Aṣārḥ*, *Śrāvan*, *Bhādrapad*, and *Aṣvin* (Hindi) (July through October). This excerpt, from a song about one of the god Kṛṣṇa’s loves, Lalita, captures this theme:

In *Aṣārḥ*, the dark clouds gathered,
 In *Śrāvan* [*Śrāvan*], the east wind blew.
 In *Bhādon* [*Bhādrapad*], I could not see the hidden path:
 The ponds and lakes are filled with water;
 In the month of *Kvar* [*Aṣvin*], Syam did not come to the house.

Bārahmāsā are an ancient poetic form, though no Sanskrit versions have been found. Most authors concur that it is a vernacular, non-Sanskritic poetic form related to, and perhaps derived from, the more popular *caumasā* (songs of the four months of the rainy season). In areas as separated as Bengal and Rajasthan, we find *bārahmāsā* inserted into longer poetic narratives, such as the *Manasā maṅgal* of Bipradās composed in 1495 C.E. in Bengali and an anonymous *dhola-maru* composed in western Rajasthan in the fifteenth century. Today, *bārahmāsā* are sung in rural communities

throughout northern India, often as independent pieces, but sometimes as part of oral epics such as *Dholā* or *Pābūjī*. They are also available in chapbook form in urban markets. *Bārahmāsā* composed and published under colonial rule had titles such as “The Banning of Cow Slaughter.” Thus, *bārahmāsā* is a genre easily adapted by local poets to a variety of topics and didactic themes. One of the most popular new *bārahmāsā* honors the recently deceased female ex-dacoit (robber/bandit) and political leader, Phoolan Devi. While retaining the format and core symbolism of the twelve months of the Hindu calendar, the popular folk *bārahmāsā* are extremely diverse in content and allow rural poet-singers opportunities to comment on a variety of issues.

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SUSAN WADLEY

SEE ALSO

Song

BĀUL SONG

The songs of the Bāuls are among the most popular Bengali folk songs. The Bāuls, who are found all over Bengal, belong to a syncretic devotional tradition that was influenced by all three major religions of the Indian subcontinent—Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam—but also has distinctive features of its own. The term “Bāul” does not refer to a single homogeneous religious group. Rather, various Hindu and Muslim groups with similar beliefs and practices centering on the body and on bodily fluids go by the name Bāul, though not all such groups refer to themselves by that name. These groups are usually not divided along strictly sectarian lines. A Hindu guru may have Muslim disciples and vice versa.

The history of the Bāuls is obscure. Scholars place their origin anywhere from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, but due to the oral and esoteric nature of the Bāul tradition, it is not possible to date its birth with any certainty. The earliest definite textual reference to the Bāuls as a religious tradition, however, is not until 1870. It is clear that the tradition reached its peak in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the majority of Bāul songs that comprise the present-day corpus were composed. Bāul songs continue to be composed to this day.

a theme is the role of love as a force on the mystical journey undertaken with the direction of the spiritual guide or *Imām*.

In composing these devotional songs, the Ismā'īlī preacher-saints, like several of their Sufi contemporaries, adopted an approach that stressed the expression of Islamic concepts in terms of the indigenous religious and cultural milieu of their audience. For example, the Ismā'īlī concept of the *Imām* (spiritual leader and guide) is explained by establishing an ostensible correspondance with the Vaisnavite Hindu concept of the *avatāra* (earthly incarnation of the deity Vishnu as a saviour). Consequently, in the contemporary period, neoconservative Islamic groups have attacked the *ginān* literature for its "syncretistic" and supposedly "un-Islamic" character. The community has responded by replacing vocabulary and concepts likely to be construed as "Hinduistic" with those having a greater resonance with the Perso-Arabic Islamic tradition.

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ALI ASANI

SEE ALSO

Islam; Saints; Song; Syncretism

GIRAU

Islam forbids the taking of interest on loans, which is regarded as usury, but allows for the lending of real property in return for money, as an exchange of usufruct. Thus in Afghanistan, in *girau*, a common form of traditional lending arrangement avoids interest payment while still benefiting the lender. The borrower turns over to the lender a piece of real property, such as a house or a piece of land, for a set period, usually seven years, and gets in return a sum of money. Each uses the other's property for the stated period, at the end of which, either the real property owner returns the same amount of money that was borrowed and receives his

property back, or the money lender keeps the property that secured the loan. Although this arrangement allows the money lender to derive profit from the use of the borrower's property without resorting to the collecting of interest, historically it represented some danger for small landowners. Although a good number of Afghan farmer-land owners in recent decades have been small farmers, the climatic cycle of Afghanistan includes periodic droughts during which such small farmers have mortgaged land under *girau* to make ends meet, and then been unable to accumulate enough surplus to redeem the property in the time period.

The principal lenders have been larger landowners or urban merchants with surplus capital. The communist regime in Afghanistan tried to eliminate *girau* by decree in 1979, as one of their first major reform efforts, but contrary to the government's expectation, this decree became a focal point of protest and armed resistance to the government. For one thing, the decree simply declared all *girau* arrangements null and void, with real property to be returned to the debtors, but the government did not have the capital required to replace the traditional lending institution with other forms of rural credit. Also, because Islam recognizes the sanctity of private property, the decree was criticized as simple robbery of the money-lending parties in the voided contracts. Thus, the central government's attempt to eliminate a traditional credit form, which they regarded as exploitative of the non-moneyed population, backfired and became a focal point in the Islamic critique of the communist government's policies and a basis for *jihād* or holy war.

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SEE ALSO

Credit System; *Jajmāni*

GLASS

The earliest true glass in the subcontinent, in the form of a red-brown bead, has been recently discovered at the site of Harappa dating to the Late Harappan Period around 1730 B.C.E. More widespread use of glass is seen in black-colored bangles and beads dating to the Painted Grey Ware period (1100–800 B.C.E.) in northern India and Pakistan. During the Early Historic period,

beginning around 300 B.C.E., there is a significant increase in the use of glass for making black, yellow, green, and blue bangles and beads. These ornaments were produced at major settlements throughout the subcontinent and traded to Southeast Asia as well as Africa.

During the colonial period, a flood of European glass beads, bottles, and lamp fixtures undermined most of the local industries. After the independence of India and Pakistan, many of the traditional glassworking areas have been revived, and the ancient techniques continue to be practiced alongside more modern processes. For example, Hyderabad in Sindh, Pakistan, is famous for glass bangles as well as layered glass inlay for jewelry, and Muradabad, near Delhi, is now one of the largest glassworking areas of northern India.

Glass is primarily different from a glaze in that it is made without an underlying body of quartz or terracotta. Other differences between glazes and glass are apparent in their overall physical structure and chemical composition. The preparation of good quality glass requires the preparation of a frit (semivitrified silica) mixed with colorants, followed by the cooling and re-grinding of the frit to homogenize the mixture, and finally, the melting of the powdered frit to produce a molten glass. In antiquity, glass was more opaque due to many tiny bubbles and impurities; modern glass contains lead and other additives to create clear and uniform colors. Using metal tongs, hooks and blow pipes, the molten glass can be made into beads, bangles, vessels, flat sheets, or mirrors. After forming, the glass must be annealed and cooled slowly to relieve stresses and avoid cracking.

Today, the most important common ornaments made of glass are bangles and beads, which are cheap enough to be available to most people. More valuable beads and bangles are coated with gold or mercury to produce brilliant gold and silver-colored ornaments. The wearing of many glass bangles is customary for women widely across the subcontinent. For Hindus, glass bangles are ritually broken, and not worn again, when a woman is widowed. Glass is extensively used for decoration of jewelry as a glaze, as in the famous *minakari* ornaments of Rajasthan and South India. Mirror work is also used in architecture: in the interiors of rooms, a single candle is reflected in thousands of mirrors, brightening the room, and on the exteriors of buildings, the mirrors sparkle in the bright sunlight. Embroidery with mirror work is also an important part of folk costume, creating glistening movement in the darkness of night or dazzling displays in the daylight. In folk traditions of northern India and Pakistan, ground glass mixed with glue is used to coat kite strings in order to cut the string of an opponent during kite festivals. Bottles and lamp fixtures are also made of glass.

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SEE ALSO

Bangles; Beads; Faience; Material Culture

GOA

Goa, the twenty-fifth state of India, is one of the more recent states to join the Indian nation. It was first granted the status of a territory within the Indian Union in 1961 following 451 years of Portuguese colonial rule. Goa was fully integrated into the Indian Union as a separate state in 1987. It has an area of 3701.2 square kilometers and an estimated population of 1,168,622, with a literacy rate of approximately 77 percent. Panjim, the capital of Goa, was first used as a port city by the Portuguese until it became the capital in 1843.

Despite the Portuguese attempt to link Goa to Lisbon phonetically and etymologically, the most explicit reference to the name Goa occurred in the twelfth century. The name Goa derives from the pastoral and cattle (*gō-*) herding communities of *Gōpa*, who gave their name to the river Gomati and created such names for the territory as Goparashtra, Gaurashtra, Gomantak, and Goa. According to the People of India series (1993), they are most likely the ancestors of the present-day *Gauḍa* of the Western Ghats.

Goa remained a Portuguese colony from 1510 to 1961. The arrival of Vasco de Gama in 1498 led to the downfall of the Adil Shahi dynasty reigning at Bijapur and the establishment of an intricate trade network between the ports of Lisbon, East Africa, and the west coast of India. With the capture of Goa by Affonso d'Albuquerque, the Portuguese created a center for an empire that was largely cast "in a military and ecclesiastical mold." As the first Viceroy of Goa, Albuquerque embellished the seaport of Panjim with Portuguese architecture, Portuguese governors, and a long wall on the eastern side of the state of Goa for added protection against invading Muslims. Throughout Portuguese colonial rule, a large number of Goans were converted to Christianity and induced to adopt Portuguese surnames, language and literature, dress and food, as well

jātrās on sociopolitical themes in urban and semiurban settings.

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RATNA ROY

SEE ALSO

Pilgrimage; Theater and Drama

JEWELRY AND ADORNMENT

The great diversity of jewelry and adornment in the subcontinent reflects the complex social hierarchies and religious beliefs of urban and rural populations. Although many of the ornament styles present in the subcontinent have parallels in other regions of the world, unique styles of body ornament are distinctly South Asian in character and can be traced to the prehistoric and early historic periods.

During the late Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods (before 10,000 to 6000 B.C.E.), cave paintings in central India depicted male and female figures wearing earrings, necklaces, bangles, belts, leg and ankle ornaments, hair ornaments, horned headdresses, and masks made of hanging beads or strings. Mesolithic burials with antler and bone ornaments suggest that most of these early forms of adornment were made of perishable materials such as bone, antler, shell, and plants. Body painting or tattooing may also be represented in some of the rock paintings.

In the earliest Neolithic burials at Mehrgarh, Pakistan (ca. 7000 B.C.E.), children as well as adults were buried with elaborate ornaments, including bracelets made of beads or circlets of shell, beaded anklets, necklaces, hair ornaments, and waist ornaments. Somewhat later, around 4000 B.C.E., painted terra-cotta figurines provide strong evidence for the use of pigments in ritual and decorative ways: henna-colored hair, eyes outlined with black pigment, and vermilion powder painted in

the central part of the hair. With the rise of cities during the Indus Valley Civilization (2600–1900 B.C.E.), there was an explosion of new ornament styles and newly created raw materials used in ornaments. This dramatic change can be associated with the need for more distinctive ornament styles to differentiate the many different ethnic communities and occupational classes living in the cities and villages. Numerous styles of bangles and ankle ornaments are created from both natural and artificial materials. Finger and toe rings, stud earrings, and possible nose ornaments are seen for the first time in the Indus cities. A conical form of hair ornament as well as red carnelian pendants that may have been worn in the center of the forehead have also been recovered. These ornaments were made from precious metals such as silver, gold, copper or bronze, as well as from semiprecious stones, shell, ivory, terra-cotta, glazed faience, and decorated steatite.

Today, the symbolic meaning of ornaments is quite complex and varies by ethnic community. In most communities, however, ornamentation is used to enhance sensual beauty, to protect the individual from evil, and to control or enhance the power of the wearer. The wearing of ornaments begins with childhood and ends with death, when most people's ornaments are removed. During each stage of life, different forms of ornaments are worn, depending on the social class, religion, and economic status of the individual.

Children's jewelry is often quite functional and serves to protect the child during illness and physical development. Teething amulets are tied around the wrist of infants, and anklets with bells help the mother keep track of a child's movements. Amulets tied around the waist or arms protect the child, and ears are often pierced to cure fever and other childhood illnesses. In the Punjab, mothers often pray for a son and vow to adorn him with silver bangles and anklets for five years, after which the ornaments will be given to a holy person or donated to the tomb of the saint. Protective amulets may continue to be worn into old age, even though they soon become overshadowed by other forms of jewelry or clothing. Girls begin to wear distinctive jewelry quite early on, especially in communities that practice child marriage, even though this practice is officially banned. Boys are often dressed as girls to confuse the evil spirits who prey on male children. Eventually, as they pass into puberty, boys tend to retain only bangles, earrings, and necklaces, depending on the specific social class or ethnic community.

In adulthood, the differences between men's and women's ornaments are generally defined by specific social or ethnic communities. In some societies men do not wear earrings or bangles, while in others, these are the norm. Men in South Asia rarely wear nose rings

or nose studs, both of which are distinctively female ornaments. Among Hindu communities, women, who are considered the embodiment of *śaktī* (the female principle), often wear bangles, anklets, nose rings, earrings, etc. to protect the major orifices and extremities, and to control the power that can emanate from these parts of the body. The control and protection of these powers is something that is particular to women and not men. For example, the nose is a very important channel for life-sustaining air, but only women wear nose ornaments to protect this part of the body. Bangles protect the woman's own body, but by wearing bangles, especially iron, a woman also protects her husband, and thereby the rest of her family, from evil powers. Forehead ornaments are worn to enhance beauty, but also have a symbolic connection to the third eye or spiritual power. When a woman's husband dies, all of her ornaments are removed or broken, and she is only allowed to wear a few protective amulets.

Perhaps the most important function of ornaments is that they serve to define a person's social and economic status and reinforce ideology. Jewelry worn by women is particularly important as insurance against hard times and unsupportive husbands. Much of a woman's jewelry is obtained during marriage rituals from relatives or from the husband's family, either as a dowry or as bride wealth. The styles of ornaments identify a woman's religion and ethnic affiliation, with distinctive ornaments being worn by different classes of Muslims, Hindus, Jain, Sikh, Christian, and other communities. When these ornaments are worn, anyone who is familiar with the symbolism can identify the caste, class, and religion of a woman without ever speaking to her. This is also the case with ornaments worn by men. This form of nonverbal communication helps to reduce conflict in urban centers by informing strangers about a person's affiliations.

Over and above all of these symbolic and functional reasons, people wear jewelry and adornment for the joy and beauty of ornamentation. The sound of ankle bells or clinking bracelets is a common theme in poetry, evoking the long-awaited approach, or departure, of a lover.

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JONATHAN MARK KENOYER

SEE ALSO

Bangles; Beads; Dowry and Bridewealth; Dress; Punjab

JEWISH FOLKLORE

Two Jewish communities in South Asia are the Cochin Jews and the Bene Israel Jews. These communities differ in their culture and religious practices.

Cochin Jews

While their faithful adherence to "high tradition" Judaism marks the Cochin Jews of Kerala off from their Hindu, Muslim, and Christian neighbors, a variety of folk practices and beliefs serve as cultural bridges between them and their Malayali cultural milieu.

The Cochin Jews invest much creativity in articulating an origin legend that stresses roots in both Jerusalem and Cranganore, the traditional capital of the Chera dynasty, known as Shingly in medieval Jewish geography. The Cochin Jews claim they arrived in Cranganore directly from Jerusalem, fleeing the Roman sack of the city in 70 C.E., and were warmly welcomed by the Maharaja. Three hundred years later, the Maharaja, whom the Cochin Jews refer to as Cheraman Perumal, gave a copper plate charter (which scholars date from the beginning of the eleventh century) to the leader of the Jews, Joseph Rabban, granting him proprietary and taxation rights over Anjuvannam, which the Jews claimed was an independent principality. The Maharaja and Joseph Rabban became archetypes of Hindu–Jewish relations in Kerala, celebrated in Malayali wedding songs which state that "every bridegroom is Joseph Rabban."

Women's religious life shows some Malayali influence, especially of the matrilineal Nayar nobility. For example, the synagogue's *parohet* (curtains before the Holy Ark) are made from women's festive *mundu* (sarongs), a display of the esteemed position of women in this community. During their most distinctive celebration, *Simhat Torah* (the autumn festival of "rejoicing in the Torah"), scores of *mundu* decorate the synagogue, a reflection of the royal Nayars' matrilineality.

Mystics also serve as bridges between the Jews and their neighbors. One in particular, Nehemia Mota (d. 1631), has become the center of a local saint cult. His tomb in Jew Town is revered by Hindus, Muslims, and Christians as well as Jews, and Nehemia Mota functions as a "village god," efficacious in settling disputes, in

Let this mātām continue on behalf of the one who was wronged, for as long as Fāṭima's cry comes forth.
This mātām is a prayer for Fāṭima:
how could this mātām ever cease?

These verses warrant comparison with a nauḥa composed for another Hyderabadī Shī'a guild, the Anjuman-i Ma'šūmīn [the association of the "sinless ones"]:

O young men of lamentation ...

truly, till the gathering of humankind on the Day of Resurrection there will continue from breasts the sound of mātām.

Such verses focus less on the past historical event of Karbalā and more on the present-day Shī'a congregation that recalls this event. These poems hold a mirror up to participants, inviting them to contemplate themselves as they perform the characteristically Shī'a ritual of mātām. In South Asia as elsewhere in the world, Shī'a populations define themselves as those Muslims who are outstanding in their loyalty to the Prophet's family, to Ḥusayn and to his descendants the Imāms. Breast-beating and group lamentation during Muḥarram give witness to this loyalty in a way evinced by no other people, in a way that marks Shī'a Muslims as distinct from all other communities. Mātām, then, can be said to contribute to Shī'a communal identity.

Such at least is the ideal as represented in the texts chanted by the mātami gurūhān. In practice, however, there is some blurring of communal boundaries in the religiously syncretistic environment of Hyderabad's Old City neighborhoods. During Muḥarram some Hindus visit Shī'a shrines to venerate the relics on display; and at least a few prominent Hindu families in the Old City sponsor majālis and invite the most popular Shī'a mātami gurūhān to come and lead the mixed Hindu-Muslim congregation in the performance of mātām.

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DAVID PINAULT

SEE ALSO

Chapbooks; Fāṭima; Islam; Lament; *Majlis*; *Muḥarram*; *Nauḥa*

MATERIAL CULTURE

Material culture refers to the physical objects that are created by humans. Modern studies of material culture have changed significantly from the early collections of tools, clothing, and ritual paraphernalia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to a focus on the interplay of the different variables that affect the creation of material culture. These factors include the environment and available raw materials, technology and the organization of production, socioeconomic organization, and ideology and belief systems. Material culture is a key element for personal identity as well as community and national identity. Because material culture encompasses every aspect of human society, both past and present, methodologies and theoretical frameworks for its study are varied.

Historically, material culture studies began with pure description of different types of objects and then moved to evolutionary and diffusionist perspectives. In the evolutionary approaches, classification was based on the number of components of which an object was comprised. Simple objects such as a sharpened stick for digging or throwing were placed at one end of the classification, and more complex objects with attachments and ornamentation were placed at the opposite end. Diffusionist approaches assumed that certain aspects of material culture originated in one area of the world and spread to the rest. The movements could be traced by comparing similar objects and relating the numbers of components or stylistic attributes. In a later development, historical particularists focused on the unique material objects of individual culture areas to understand independent trajectories. Initial attempts at a universal classification of objects and the indiscriminate use of diffusionary models have proven to be relatively meaningless and have not helped to understand variation within or between cultures. Subsequently, the study of material culture has become fragmented into many different subfields with very different methodologies and goals.

Ethnographers tend to collect, classify, and describe objects collected from living communities by using a wide range of methodologies that are developed for a limited culture and that are later adapted for broad cross-cultural comparisons. Functionalist and structural approaches concentrate on the role of material

culture in serving basic human needs as well as its function in maintaining socioeconomic and political order. More recently, popular culture studies have begun to look at the role of material culture in defining such topics as personal identity, ethnicity and globalism. Many of these more recent ethnographic approaches have moved from the study of the objects themselves to a study of what those objects mean and how their production or reproduction reflect social, economic, and ideological aspects of a society.

Archaeological research relies totally on material culture that is preserved in the archaeological record. This body of data represents a distinct but incomplete record of prehistoric or archaeological cultures. Ethnoarchaeologists study specific aspects of modern material culture to understand how the patterning of material culture that would be preserved archaeologically can help us to understand social, economic, and political aspects of earlier societies. A material science approach is used by specialists who are interested in the ways in which materials are transformed through various technological processes among specific communities today or in antiquity, including, for example, the processes for producing glazed ceramics or coloring stone.

In the study of material culture it is often useful to compare and contrast objects from different regions over time. The variations in shape and decoration represent different contextual levels of a culture, individual variation, community or assemblage variation, and on a larger scale, variation between cultural traditions. Cultural traditions are "persistent configurations of basic technologies and cultural systems within the context of temporal and geographical continuity" (Willey and Phillips 1958, 37).

In order to compare material culture in a meaningful and reproducible way, it is necessary to classify and order material culture, but there is no absolute classification system because each classification system must be designed to address specific questions or problems. However, all good classification systems employ two complementary approaches, taxonomy and systematics. Taxonomy is the system of concepts and terms used to classify objects: jar, pot, bowl, and dish. Systematics is the method for creating units; for example, a jar is taller than it is wide and has an open or restricted orifice. The different variables that are used to characterize objects are usually referred to as attributes. This term, and the concept itself, are a part of taxonomy, while the way in which attributes are grouped or identified is a part of systematics. Five basic attributes that can be used to understand an object include: (1) form (shape and size); (2) style (decoration); (3) technology of manufacture; (4) raw materials; and (5) function (utilitarian

and/or symbolic). These attributes vary in importance, depending on the cultural context and the type of object being produced. In South Asia, the type of wood used in prayer beads is generally more important symbolically than is the shape. In contrast, shape may be more important than material in the production of the pipal leaf or mango shape in textiles, gold ornaments, clay, or wood.

Another approach to material culture, coming from the field of archaeology, has tried to understand the factors that lead to standardization of production and style, as well as the potential for control of crafts that are used to reinforce and legitimize social order. Kenoyer has proposed a four-category classification of craft professions that produce material culture based upon two cross-cutting axes: the local versus nonlocal availability of raw material and the simple or complex character of the technologies involved. The local raw material and simple technologies include: woodworking, hand-formed and low-fired terra-cotta ceramic production, and house building. The nonlocal material and simple technologies include: stoneworking and flint knapping. The local raw material and complex technologies include: stoneware bangle production, other elaborated ceramic industries, and elaborate woodwork. The nonlocal raw material and complex technologies include: agate bead manufacture, seal production, and metalworking. The more complex technologies tend towards increased standardization, while the other categories show a higher degree of regional variation.

Political and economic control of craft production may include control of technological know-how, labor, access to raw materials, distribution, and consumption. In general, cross-cultural research has shown that political elites of chiefdoms patronize the production of luxury goods manufactured with raw materials that are nonlocal, rare or difficult to obtain, and are transformed through massive investment of labor in the form of simple technologies. On the other hand, many state-level societies show a radical shift, sponsoring the production of ornaments and status signs whose raw materials are relatively common or easy to obtain but require very elaborate technologies. These studies of material culture can be applied to nonarchaeological contexts as well, but in living crafts, a host of other factors that normally are not preserved archaeologically must be accounted for. These include the status associated with specific materials or their production, and the socio-ritual and economic value of specific materials. These values often translate into the ranking of specific crafts as well as the social and ritual status of craft communities.

The social dimensions of production and exchange are continuously being negotiated as communities struggle to survive competition, and improve their

economic as well as ritual status. The legitimization of social status and ranking among craft communities is often provided through folk stories and origin myths. Stories that explain the origin of specific materials can be found in the early Vedas and Purāṇic texts. For example the sacred conch shell was created when the god Śiva destroyed a powerful demon and cast his bleached bones into the sea. Hindu and Buddhist traditions generally link the different crafts communities to mythical events, while Muslim communities often rely on historical associations. For example, Hindu shell bangle workers in Bengal trace their craft to the sage Agastya Muni who created a specialized saw from the sacred *khus* grass in order to make shell bangles for the goddess Pārvaṭī. Muslim agate bead makers in Khambhat trace their origins to the Abyssinian saint Bawa Ghor, who brought Islam to Gujarat and destroyed the temple of the goddess who controlled the agate-mining areas.

These stories are important sources of information on changing social and religious dimensions of material culture. The conch shell was first used in ritual contexts of the Indus Valley Civilization (2600–1900 B.C.E.). It was then borrowed and incorporated into late Vedic culture (roughly 1800–800 B.C.E.) and has come to be a distinctive symbol of various Hindu deities. Buddhist rituals incorporate the conch shell as an important symbol and use conch shell libation vessels and conch shell trumpets. Even Muslim mystics in many parts of Pakistan and India use the conch shell trumpet in ceremonies associated with specific saints. Each of these communities has specific stories to validate the use of shared material culture symbols such as the sacred conch shell, but it is not always possible to sort out the origins of these accounts.

Due to a reaction against positivist approaches to the study of culture, many anthropologists and folklorists shy away from the systematic and quantitative study of material culture. In their work, material culture is viewed qualitatively without rigidly defined parameters. On the other hand, specialized studies of specific types of material culture, such as textiles, masks, and jewelry, do implement standard methodologies for classification and analysis, generally borrowing from standards in commerce and the fields of history and archaeology.

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JONATHAN MARK KENOYER

SEE ALSO

Carpets and Carpet-Weaving; Crafts; *Dāsara*; Dress; Faience; Fish and Fishing; Folk Art; Food and Foodways; Glass; *Mandecculu*; Metal and Metalworking; Toys; Wedding Videos

MATERIAL CULTURE, PAKISTAN

Pakistan's territory encompasses a highly varied geography, from the severe Tharparkar deserts of the south-east and the arid Makran coast to the west, the rich irrigated Indus Valley agricultural lands of Punjab and Sindh, to the semi-arid highlands of Balochistan, the wooded southern slopes of the Hindukush/Karakorum mountain ranges, to the highest semi-arid valleys and alpine pastures north of passes reaching over 12,000, and the permanent snows of some of the highest peaks in the world, including Nanga Parbat and K-2. This range of ecological zones supports a number of distinctive cultures. As elsewhere, however, ecological resources only begin to explain the distribution of craft skills and material culture styles. Yet there is also continuity, in that certain elements can be traced to the oldest layers of regional style, dating from the Indus Valley civilizations, including Mohenjo Daro and Harappa (ca. 2600–1700 B.C.E.). Shapes of pottery and design motifs attested from this most ancient period are still produced today; a contemporary wooden cart in Lok Virsa, the National Folk Heritage Museum in Islamabad, closely resembles the style of cart preserved in small models of fired clay from Mohenjo Daro. The *borendo*, a shepherd's three-holed clay flute, can be similarly dated and is still played. The more recent Buddhist culture of the Gandhāra region (north central Indus Valley to

METAL AND METALWORKING

Allhabad and Haridwar. The religious nature of melās is complemented by both economic exchange and entertainment. Thus, for example, the well-known melā at the pilgrimage center of Puṣkar in Rajasthan is held during the month of Kārttika (October-November) and includes a huge camel, oxen, and horse fair, as well as staging of folk theater, camel-racing tournaments, Ferris wheels, and magic shows.

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ADITYA MALIK

SEE ALSO

Ancestor Worship; Fairs and Festivals; Pilgrimage; Sacred Places; 'Urs; Worship

METAL AND METALWORKING

The use of metal in the subcontinent has a very long history and from the very earliest times, the color of different metals, and presumably their symbolic value, may have played a more significant role in their use than utilitarian functions usually associated with metals. The oldest use of metallic ores is found during the Palaeolithic period, dating more than 10,000 years ago, where oxidized iron in the form of red and yellow ochre or black hematite was used for cave paintings. Natural stones with laminations of ochre forming triangular patterns were used in what is thought to have been a shrine at the site of Baghor, Madhya Pradesh, India at around 11,000 years ago. Early terra-cotta female figurines dating to around 4000 B.C.E. reveal the use of red ochre (iron ore) to decorate the central part of the hair, and in later times vermilion (mercuric sulfide) was used to make a red dot in the middle of the forehead and the central part of hair as a sacred symbol of purity and power. Even today, Hindu women continue to use the *tika*, or dot on the forehead, to symbolize ritual purity or as cosmetic decoration.

The earliest metal object is a copper bead on a burial necklace from the pre-ceramic levels at the site of Mehrgarh, Pakistan, dating to around 6500 B.C.E. Probably made from native copper, a reddish metal, this bead appears to have been used as an ornament or amulet. Among the earliest gold objects are tiny beads from the site of Jalilpur, Pakistan, dating to before 3500 B.C.E. Many other early uses of metal have been documented, and, in all cases, metals were first used as decorative or symbolic objects. Even in later times, when the functional properties of various metals were fully understood and exploited, the color and symbolic properties of metals continued to play an important role in the pro-

duction of ornaments, images, tools and utensils. South Asia is one of the only regions of the world where pure gold and silver foil is used extensively for the decoration of food or as a component of medical preparations and is consumed by people from all walks of life. Copper was first used to make functional tools such as pins and blades beginning in the 5th to 4th millennium B.C.E. at the site of Mehrgarh. The beginnings of copper alloys, comprising tin bronze and arsenical bronze, are not well dated, but both types of alloys are reported from numerous sites of the Indus Valley Civilization beginning around 2600 B.C.E.

Historically, the important metals used in the subcontinent include gold, silver, copper, tin, iron, lead, mercury, zinc, and nickel. After the discovery of aluminum and platinum, these metals have also become important in the production of both ornamental and functional objects. Alloys comprised of two or more metals have also play a significant role in the symbolic and utilitarian technologies of the subcontinent, and, in many cases, South Asia has been at the forefront, producing new alloys, such as crucible steel (Damascus steel or *wootz*), which were later replicated in other regions of the world.

The social status of metalworkers in the subcontinent has undergone significant modifications and subdivisions during the past two thousand years. In the early texts, such as the *R̥g Veda* and later *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, smiths occupied a position of importance and were grouped with the third *varna*, the Vaiśya. During the later Mauryan period (3rd century B.C.E.) and Gupta period (3rd century C.E.) many of the occupational Vaiśya communities were regarded as mixed castes and grouped with the fourth *varna* of Śudras. However, metalworkers continued to be ranked higher and remained in this status until the eleventh and twelfth centuries C.E., after which they became relegated to a lower status of Vaiśya, which was basically equal to Śudras. In modern times, metalworkers in different parts of the subcontinent hold varying status, depending on their ethnic affiliations and the specific activities they engage in. For example, tribal ironworkers, such as Agaria and Asur, are ranked lower than Lohar from Bihar, while goldsmiths, such as the Sonar of the Punjab, take the sacred thread of Vaiśya castes and are considered semi-clean by the highest Brahman caste.

Gold

Gold is the most highly valued metal of the subcontinent, and the earliest evidence for gold ornaments is found during the Chalcolithic period of the Indus Valley region, fifth to fourth millennium B.C.E. All of the early gold ornaments that have been tested are comprised

of gold with silver, and, in some cases, copper alloy that must have been intentionally added. Several hoards of gold jewelry, probably hidden by rich merchants or elites, have been found in the Indus cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa, as well as in smaller settlements such as Kunal, Lothal, and Allahdino. During the Indus Civilization, elaborate gold ornaments were not buried with the dead, but were kept in circulation, an indication that gold's economic value was well established. This perception of gold continued in the Early Historic Period. In the Arthashastra (3rd century B.C.E.) a kingdom was considered prosperous if it had sufficient gold reserves from which it could purchase grain or support armies when needed. Written sources attest to the early use of gold punch-marked coins, but the oldest preserved gold coins date to the Mauryan period around 300 B.C.E. and continued to be used up through the Mughal period.

The legendary sources for gold in the northern subcontinent were of great interest to early Greek and Roman writers, resulting in stories of ants the size of small dogs that mined the gold into anthills from which it could be collected. These animals were, in fact, marmots that dug burrows into the underlying sandy gold-bearing layers and are still to be seen in the high mountain valleys of Baltistan. Even today, the Soniwai tribe (literally, gold people) wash gold dust from the Indus and other rivers in Northern Pakistan and India. Even though there are major sources of alluvial gold along the Indus and many of the peninsular rivers of the Deccan, throughout history, large quantities of gold have been imported into the subcontinent from central Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, and other adjacent regions. At present, with the high consumption of gold by the burgeoning middle class, large quantities of the ore are imported—or more often smuggled—into Pakistan and India. The high consumption of gold in South Asia is due to its pervasive use in all aspects of life. Thin sheets of gold leaf are pounded out, using leather booklets and a heavy metal or stone mallet. Gold leaf is used to decorate sweets, festival foods, and betel nut, and it is commonly used in medicinal preparations. Gold powder is sprinkled over the hair or on the face as a form of decoration. Fine threads of gold are woven into cotton or silk cloth, and gold-wound yarns are used for elaborate embroideries. Gold is used for decorating all manner of utilitarian and ritual objects from swords to the images of deities, and small amounts of gold are alloyed with other base metals to increase their ritual purity. Gold is considered to be a pure substance that cannot be polluted, and in Hindu rituals it is usually associated with the sun god Surya or the god of fire Agni.

The most widespread use of gold is seen in ornaments worn by men, women, and children and even as decoration on animals and vehicles. Because of gold's

economic importance, gold ornaments function as a form of wealth and status. Women are given gold ornaments as a part of their dowry, and these ornaments are passed on from generation to generation, often being remelted to create new styles of ornaments. People who cannot afford pure gold or solid gold commonly use gold alloys or gilded ornaments, and even the poorest classes wear ornaments made of colored lac or plastic that imitate this highly valued metal.

Silver

Silver metallurgy can be traced to the Indus Valley Civilization, around 2600 B.C.E., where the metal was used to make seals, beaded necklaces and pendants, utensils, and containers that were identical to ceramic pots and jars. At present, silver is less valuable than gold, but in the prehistoric period it may have been more valuable, due to the rarity of native silver deposits and the difficulties in separating silver from ores that also contained other minerals such as lead. Today, silver is widely used in the manufacture of jewelry, utensils, and furniture, and silver foil is widely used for the decoration of foods and condiments. All classes of people use silver, but it is more commonly used as an ornament among lower economic classes, who store their wealth in the form of heavy anklets, belts, buttons, and necklaces. Due to the fact that silver tarnishes and turns black with oxidation, it is not usually made into threads and woven into cloth.

Silver coinage has been used since around 400 B.C.E., with the invention of punch-marked coins that were made in rectangular-to-circular shapes and stamped with symbolic designs. The low percentage of lead in some silver coins indicates that cupellation, a process of purification, was carried out with great perfection during the early historic period and that the use of copper alloying was also practiced to economize the use of silver and to create a stronger and more wear-resistant metal. As with gold coins, silver was used until quite recently for coinage and even today, ritual amulets and commemorative coins or pendants are made of pure silver.

Copper

Copper was one of the earliest metals used in the subcontinent to produce a wide range of objects, including ornaments and ritual objects, utensils, tools, and weapons. Occupational specialists who make objects from pure copper (Hindi, *tamba* or *tama*) are generally distinguished from artisans who make objects from copper alloys such as bronze (Hindi, *kansi*) or brass (Hindi, *pital*). Copper-working areas are common at many of the earliest sites of the Indus Valley civilization, and copper workers are attested to

in the early literary sources. Hindus generally consider copper to be a pure metal, and it is used extensively for the preparation of ritual containers and utensils for use in household shrines and temples. Copper vessels and utensils are also used in domestic contexts where ritual purity is maintained. Throughout the historical period, permanent legal documents and land grants were often inscribed on rectangular copper plates that were buried or stored in temples. Even today, pure copper is used for a wide array of ornamental and ritual objects that are produced using much more difficult techniques of manufacture than is necessary for other copper alloys. Due to the fact that pure copper is very difficult to cast, most objects are produced through a labor-intensive process of heating and hammering, followed by chiseling, chasing, or lathing.

Pure copper objects that are used in temples or domestic contexts include water vessels, spoons or ladles, plates, cups, and glasses. Copper is used to make tridents, snakes, and other ritual paraphernalia, such as small sheets of pure copper decorated with stamped designs or sacred words. Many medicinal treatments require the wearing of pure copper against the skin, and it is not uncommon to see people wearing copper rings, bangles, amulets, and earrings alongside gold or silver jewelry. Because of the toxic accumulations that result from chemical reactions produced by acidic foods, pure copper cooking vessels are always coated with a protective coating of tin or nickel.

Copper Alloys

During the prehistoric period, copper was alloyed with tin or arsenic. Arsenical bronze is harder and more brittle than tin bronze, but it also may have had a distinctive color because many ornaments and nonutilitarian objects were made with arsenical bronze during the Harappan period (2600–1900 B.C.E.). Arsenical coppers are no longer produced, due in part to the dangers in smelting and the common availability of iron and steel.

At present, the major alloys produced in the subcontinent include bronze (copper and tin), brass (copper and zinc), and a variety of alloys made by combinations of more than two metals. The amount of alloy determines the taste, brittleness, color, and sound of the metal. Usually, bells and gongs are made from tin bronze with a small amount of lead to improve the flow for casting. Ritual images and complex ornamental fixtures are often made with similar compositions of copper, tin, and lead. In some cases, tiny amounts of gold and silver are added to create a five-metal alloy. Iron is also sometimes added to such complex alloys, primarily for its symbolic or ritual properties and not for any known structural benefit.

Brass is quite common throughout the subcontinent, and because it is easy to cast, many complex images and ornamental pieces are made with this alloy. In domestic contexts, brass is used to make plates, cups, bowls, glasses, and serving utensils. Although brass is ritually less pure than copper, it is still used to make a wide range of ritual objects.

Unlike goldsmiths and silversmiths who can be found in large cities as well as in small villages, copper workers generally live in segregated villages or urban neighborhoods. Historically, copper-working centers were located near major sources of the metal or along major trade routes. A similar distribution pattern is seen for bronze-working and large scale brass-production centers. Copper, bronze, and brass objects that were produced in these widely dispersed workshops were traded throughout the subcontinent by middlemen or sold at annual fairs.

Due to the fact that metal can be easily recycled and old metal objects are available throughout the countryside, many communities of itinerant metalworkers move along annual circuits to scavenge broken vessels and utensils. Votive figurines, toys, utensils, and containers of various shapes and sizes are produced for personal use and also for a wide array of consumer groups. The object to be cast is usually formed with beeswax or resin around a clay core and then covered with a clay mold. Casting is achieved by melting the wax and pouring molten metal into the hollow spaces enclosed by the mold. Generally, the metal is melted in closed crucibles that are attached to the mold. The metal is a mixture of copper, brass, and bronze in differing proportions. More recently, with the increasing availability of recycled aluminum, this nontraditional metal is commonly mixed with the copper alloys or cast by itself. Because of their mobility and the fact that they scavenge metal and rework it, the social status of these itinerant communities is generally lower than the permanently settled artisans who work only with pure metals or standardized alloys. The distinctive styles of cast utensils and figurines produced by these communities are often referred to as a folk craft and set apart from the classical metal casting.

Iron

Iron has a long history in the subcontinent, and, though its introduction is often attributed to external sources, current research suggests that the earliest iron objects result from indigenous technological developments during the Painted Gray Ware period around 1200 to 800 B.C.E. in the northern subcontinent. In these early sites, the oldest iron objects appear to be ornaments such as bangles and pins. Even today, the

most basic form of ornament, an iron bangle or ring, is used to indicate the marriage status of a woman or man. Eventually, utilitarian tools and weapons, such as axes, arrowheads, and blades were produced, and the *Mahābhārata* epic, which is thought to correspond to the Painted Gray Ware period, has numerous references to iron tools, weapons, and armor.

The economic importance of iron production may have had a significant impact on the location of major cities in the Ganga-Jamuna region during the Early Historic period, 600 to 300 B.C.E. In fact, some of the most powerful early city-states—Mathura, Ujjain, and Rajgriha—are strategically situated near the major iron-producing regions of north India. The manufacture of iron is much more labor intensive than copper metallurgy, and it requires more fuel for smelting and transforming the iron bloom into a workable piece of metal. In the long term, however, iron came to be much more economical to produce because of a large labor force, boundless forests, and rich iron deposits. After the initial use of iron in ornamental objects, this common metal rapidly replaced bronze tools and weapons because of its hardness and versatility. Iron can be forged, melted, joined, and cast into tools and weapons that are much lighter and stronger than copper or bronze. When wrought iron is repeatedly worked in charcoal fires, the build-up of carbon-rich layers results in carburization, a process that is attested to in metal objects dating to around 600 B.C.E.

Massive production of iron begins as early as 200 C.E. and is represented by the famous iron pillar of Delhi. This pillar weighs approximately six tons and was made by forge-welding wrought-iron blooms that each weighed approximately thirty-five kilograms. Because of unknown processes of manufacture, this iron pillar does not rust and has been the focus of numerous technological studies. Some scholars believe that the use of stone hammers resulted in a fine silica coating that effectively seals the iron surfaces and protects them from oxidation. Iron tools made with stone hammers by Agaria and Asur metalworkers of Central India are also reported to be rustproof. The pillar is 7.2 meters long and has a diameter between 30 and 40 centimeters. A popular practice among tourists is to stand with one's back to the pillar and reach backwards to try and touch one's hands around the pillar. One belief, common among teenage tourists, is that if you can accomplish this feat you will be married within the year.

Traditional iron-working communities include settled ironsmiths, or *lohar*, who live in villages or towns throughout the subcontinent, and tribal iron smelters, who live in isolated hamlets and remote villages in Central India. The settled *lohar* generally process only commercial iron and steel. Most of these smiths are

men, but some women are involved in smithing, especially among the more mobile or itinerant iron workers. Among the Gadulia Lohar, a semi-nomadic community in Western India, the men and children are involved in collecting old scrap iron while the women do much of the actual smithing.

In contrast to the *lohar* castes, two major tribal communities of Madhya Pradesh, the Agaria and the Asur, are closely associated with ironsmelting and, in the past, were involved with ironsmithing as well. Tools and weapons made by the Asur and the Agaria were less prone to rust than those made by the *lohar* or village ironworkers. While this factor may be attributed to the use of stone hammers or anvils in the past, the Agaria and Asur are also thought to have magical powers that are used to secure good iron while smelting. In the past, both men and women were involved in the processing and smelting of iron ore, but due to changing economic conditions and exposure to outside communities, this traditional lifestyle has disappeared.

Steel

Steel is a form of iron that has varying percentages of carbon interlayered with the iron to create a hard but resilient material. Carburization of iron to produce steel is relatively easy to achieve when using carbon-rich charcoal during the forging process, but the artisans of ancient India were able to produce a form of high carbon steel that was created in a crucible without any forging. Crucible steel is thought to have originated in the subcontinent and represents one of the most difficult and most advanced techniques of metalworking. The earliest evidence for crucible steel in the subcontinent is around 200 B.C.E., but recent studies suggest that it may be even earlier. Specialized ceramic crucibles that could hold molten metal were created, using locally available clays and charred rice husks. A mixture of wrought iron and steel was sealed inside of these crucibles, along with other secret ingredients, and heated in high temperature furnaces for several days. The resulting ingots of high-carbon steel were hammered out to make a variety of weapons, tools, and armor. This type of steel was being produced extensively in the subcontinent and was traded to the Near East, Africa, and Central Asia. One of the important markets for Indian steel was in Damascus, where it was reworked into swords and armor that was then sold further to the west. European merchants and crusaders came to refer to this steel as "Damascus steel," when, in fact, it was Indian steel.

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SEE ALSO

Crafts; Image-making, Metal; Metalwork, Bangladesh

METALWORK, BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh, metalwork is a folk craft since it is essentially done by the use of hand-operated tools. Metalwork products embody creativity, individual expression, and aesthetic values of a high order. The demonstration of human skill is exceedingly varied both in form and design. From the standpoint of use, the metalwork of Bangladesh falls into three broad types: utilitarian, decorative, and functional/decorative.

The metals commonly used in metalwork in Bangladesh are *tāmā* (copper), *kāñsā* (bell-metal, a bronze alloy), *pital* (brass), and *lōhā* (iron). Because of its bright color and the polish that it takes, *kāñsā* is in much demand for ornamental purposes. *Sonā* (gold), because of its cost, is prohibitive for the metalworker and is restricted to the jeweler. *Rupā* (silver), the most beautiful and adaptable for all hand processes, is also costly, but not prohibitive for the skilled metalworker who uses it in filigree work.

Three traditional methods of making metal objects are: (1) *pitāi kāj*, beating; (2) *dhālāi kāj*, casting; and

(3) *cādar kāj*, brazing. The first two methods seem to have been known and practiced in Bengal from early times. *Pitāi kāj* is the forging of metal or the controlled shaping of metal by the force of hammering; *dhālāi kāj* is the act of shaping an object by pouring molten metal into a previously formed mold; and *cādar kāj* is the shaping of available ready-made sheet metal. The beating method is generally the technique followed by blacksmiths, bell-metal smiths and brass-smiths, and that is why this method is also known as smithing: In smithing, the object is shaped by hammer blows rather than mechanical means.

There are three kinds of casting: open-mould, *cire-perdue* (French: “lost wax”), and sand casting. In open-mould casting, clay is used as a mould, and the mould is useable for only one casting. Open-mould casting is practiced at Dhamrai in Dhaka District. The *cire-perdue* process is widely prevalent in Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka City. Sand casting is the best known and most frequently used casting process in the Indian subcontinent, since it is the method best suited for high quality mass production. In Bangladesh most of the brass articles are sand-cast. Brazing differs from smithing in that forging is not employed at all, though the brazier may shape objects by hammer blows. Since the brazier works with prefabricated metal sheets, what he basically needs is a solid, hollowed-out surface on which to beat his vessels into shape. Blacksmithing is universally practiced in Bangladesh with no characteristic regional variations. Almost every village, town, or city has at least one *kāmārsālā* (smithy). Blacksmiths beat iron into various agricultural implements, household utensils, and tools used by different craftspeople, and they also repair damaged ones.

Utilitarian metalwork in bell-metal and brass has flourished over the centuries in rural centers, since the people who have traditionally used metal household objects live mostly in villages. However, these centers are located in close proximity to towns, so that products can be easily transported beyond the local market. All the important sites of decorative and functional/decorative metalwork are located in urban centers, especially in Dhaka and Chittagong, because of the concentration of prospective customers in cities.

In the British period (1757–1947) the artistic excellence of metalwork in East Bengal (the area now constituting Bangladesh) was demonstrated in gold and silver filigree, in silverplate, in architectural ironwork, and, occasionally, in brass sculptures of deities. Since 1947, there has been a major shift from the previous order and style of metalwork. This shift has taken place in two successive phases: the Pakistan period (1947–1971) and the Bangladesh period (1971 onwards).

In the early 1980s, more than three hundred cassette producers of various sizes sprouted up throughout the country, recording and marketing diverse regional musics to local audiences. Much of the cassette output has consisted of recordings of folk music in purely traditional style. A large proportion, however, has comprised relatively new subgenres explicitly associated with cassettes, often using film-style orchestration or other studio enhancements. In their evolutionary association with the mass media (especially cassettes), many such genres combine features of both folk music and commercial, syncretic popular music. Particularly popular among rural listeners are tapes of ribald songs, based on folk genres such as *Braj rasiya*, Haryanvi *rāgini*, and Maharashtrian *popat*, but produced especially for marketing on cassettes. In Gujarat, pop versions of indigenous *garbā* and *rās* have flourished in connection with the vogue of these social-dance genres. Punjabi popular music has been particularly vital, encompassing text-oriented songs of artists like Gurdas Man, and more Westernized forms of “disco *bhangra*.” (*Bhangra* is a traditional Punjabi folk dance.) The latter has evolved in a parallel fashion as a product both of South Asian Punjabis as well as emigrant Punjabi communities, especially in Great Britain.

Scholars and critics debate the ramifications of such developments and their relation to folk traditions. Some critics deplore the lewdness and triviality of the cassette output and denounce the common usage of film melodies in perceivably inappropriate genres (especially devotional music). In some cases, mass-mediated popular music can be argued to be flourishing at the expense of live performance. In many cases, however, it is unclear whether mass-mediated popular music is replacing or merely supplementing live performance; folk genres like narrative Bhojpuri *birhā* seem to be flourishing, both live and on cassette. Cassette dissemination also helps preserve genres like *qawwālī* (a Muslim devotional song genre), which are performed live less frequently than before. Most importantly, cassettes have revitalized regional music traditions and offered new mass-mediated alternatives to the otherwise hegemonic film music industry.

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PETER MANUEL

SEE ALSO

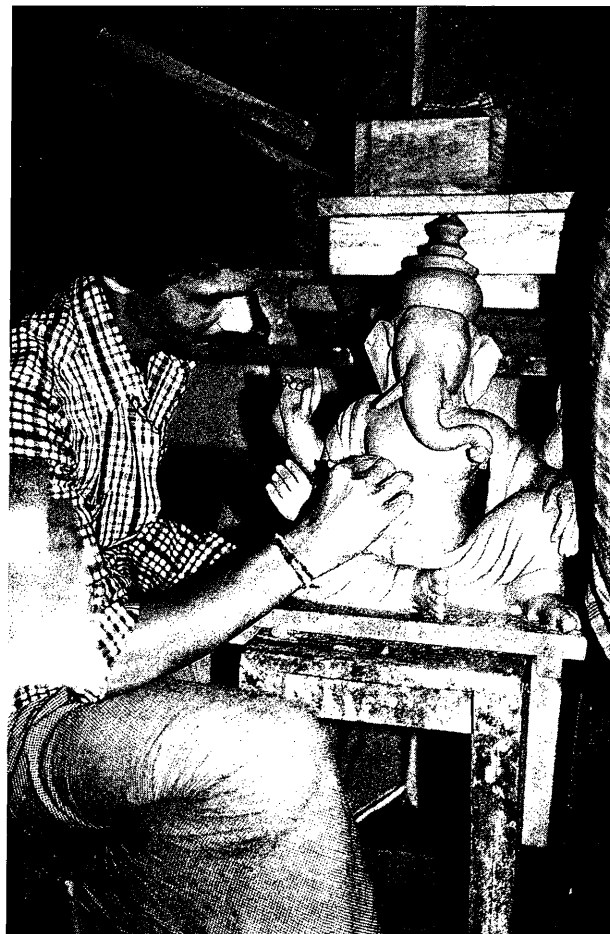
Bhajan; Cassettes; Film Music; *Gharal*; *Nautanki*; *Qawwālī*

POTTERY

Most pottery produced in South Asia is low-fired, unglazed terra-cotta made from alluvial clays that are abundant in the vast river valleys or near ponds. From about 6000 B.C.E. to the present, pottery has played an integral role in everyday subsistence and ritual activities.

The earliest terra-cotta ceramics have been recovered in excavations at the site of Mehrgarh, Pakistan, during Period Ib (ca. 6000–5500 B.C.E.). These early vessels were hand-formed bowls and pots, painted with red ochre pigment and fired at relatively low temperatures. It is quite likely that they were used for holding ritual offerings rather than serving as utilitarian vessels. During this same time, the first abstract terra-cotta female figurines were being made, also presumably for ritual purposes.

By 3500 B.C.E. ceramic production throughout the Indus Valley and the upper Ganga-Yamuna river system



A man from the potter caste carves a Ganeśa, or elephant god, which will be installed in a temple. Karnataka, India, © Mimi Nichter

had become more specialized, and a wide variety of shapes and forms had developed, which involved a combination of wheel-thrown and handcraft techniques. Various types of kilns were invented to fire pottery at higher temperatures to produce strong and durable utilitarian wares, as well as highly decorated symbolic wares. Firing of pottery with high oxygen levels in the kiln (oxidation firing) was practiced to produce red wares, and gray wares were made by making the fire smoky or with less oxygen (reduction firing). In central and south India, handcrafted pottery fired in bonfire kilns (some of which is called Black-and-Red ware) was being produced by farming communities who had limited contact with the cultures of the northwestern subcontinent.

These early ceramic traditions established the basic techniques of ceramic production that continue to be used throughout most of the subcontinent today. Various types of spinning devices are used, including the socketed wheel, the pivot wheel, and the kick-wheel. In addition to wheel throwing, pottery is handcrafted with coils, molded, or shaped with paddle and anvil. Often a combination of techniques is used to produce a single shape. While much of the everyday terra-cotta pottery is plain and undecorated, decorative techniques are used to distinguish special forms and the symbolic function of certain vessels. Slips made from red or yellow ochre are often applied to the body of the vessel, and black, brown, or white pigments are used to paint designs. Other colors are often painted after firing, such as green, bright yellow, bright red, or purple. Some pottery is burnished and highly polished, while other vessels are carved, incised, or coated with coarse slips containing sand, mica, or crushed pottery. Each of the decoration techniques has a different utilitarian or symbolic function.

In modern pottery production, men, women, and children are involved in different aspects of manufacture, with men often using the wheel, while women and children assist in clay and pigment preparation as well as in painting, figurine modeling, and molded pottery manufacture. The almost exclusive use of the potter's wheel by men throughout South Asia and many other parts of the world has puzzled scholars for decades. Some Muslim potters in the Punjab, Pakistan, say that it is the man's duty to work for the livelihood of the family and this is why the women do not use the wheel. Among many Hindu pottery communities, women are not even allowed to touch the wheel. Whatever the precise reasoning in each community, it is clear that men became the specialists who work the wheel to meet the demands of competitive mass production, while women continued to be involved in most other aspects of the process.

Pottery is used every day for cooking, storing, dispensing, and offering food. Porous terra-cotta is optimal for storing grain and other food stuffs without letting it mildew and is extremely effective for cooling water during the hot summer months. Evaporation on the exterior of the vessel helps to cool the water on the interior. This porosity, however, also allows bacteria to grow, and terra-cotta vessels on which cooked food is served are difficult to clean without firing them once again. These factors of hygiene may have contributed to the widespread belief that pottery used for eating is polluted and must be discarded. Disposable pottery is widely used for individual food service during religious festivals or feasts by both Hindu and Muslim communities. Water pots often have round bottoms or spouts so that the vessels can be tipped and the water poured, rather than dipping a cup in the vessel, which would result in pollution. Vessels that are used for cooking food can be used repeatedly so long as no one actually eats from the vessel. In fact, pottery for cooking milk and preparing yogurt are used over and over because the milk fats seal the pores, making the vessels less porous and more serviceable through the greater retention of liquids.

Pottery containers are used in most major rituals practiced by a wide range of religious communities. Among Hindus, globular pottery vessels are worshipped as a symbol of the goddess or *shakti*, possibly representing the womb, fertility, and prosperity. The Vedic sage Vasistha was born from a pot in which the semen of the god Mitra had fallen. The *Kumbha Mela*, one of the largest festivals of northern India, is held at four locations where the nectar of immortality spilled out of a golden *kumbha* (pot). In the Punjab, a pottery lid, symbolizing the bride's virginity, is broken under foot at the end of Muslim Rajput marriage ceremonies, and in Punjabi, the word for lid (*dakhan*) is often used in abusive language to refer to the hymen. At death a water-filled pot is perforated with a hole in the base and carried around the funeral pyre until the water has drained out. In some Muslim burials, a pot with a hole broken in the base is placed on the grave.

Glazed terra-cotta and porcelain ceramics became widespread in the subcontinent with the advent of Islam and the increased trade networks connecting the subcontinent to West Asia, East Asia, and later to Europe. Due to fears of pollution, strict Hindus avoid the use of glazed ceramics and prefer to use brass or bronze utensils, which can be ritually purified. However, glazed ceramic vessels are extensively used by communities that do not have strict pollution laws.

In traditional Hindu social hierarchy, potters have been relegated to the lowest castes, but, ironically, they are also seen as creators who transform mundane

materials into usable, ritually pure objects through the use of fire. In modern South Asia, some potters have relatively high status and considerable wealth due to the popularity of their products in urban and international markets. The production of Western and East Asian forms of art pottery in terra-cotta, glazed terra-cotta, high-fired stoneware, and porcelain ceramics is now quite common throughout the subcontinent, for local as well as export purposes. These new developments add a new facet to the complex nature of pottery in the subcontinent and represent a new phase in the long history of this important tradition.

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SEE ALSO

Craft; Pottery, Bangladesh; Pottery, Sri Lanka; Tiles and Tile-making, Terra Cotta

POTTERY, BANGLADESH

Bangladesh occupies the world's widest delta. The land is flat, fertile, and layered with clay. This rich resource is exploited in 680 villages devoted to the manufacture of pottery. The largest villages, with three hundred families in the trade, lie in the western districts of Jessore and Rajshahi, but pottery-making villages are found throughout the country. Although Bangladesh is predominantly a Muslim country, pottery is predominantly a Hindu craft.

The potters divide themselves into workers of two kinds. Some make utilitarian vessels for carrying water and cooking; others make images (*mūrti*) for worship. In villages where both kinds of work are done, one in ten households contains a sculptor of *mūrti*. Because *mūrti* are made seasonally for worship (*pūjā*), few of the sculptors devote all their time to images, and they must fill slack time by making the vessels that others make.

In making useful vessels, men and women use different techniques. Men use the *cāk*, the wide hand-

powered wheel that is found throughout the Indian subcontinent. Women combine molding in *pārā*, dishes turned by hand, with coiling and paddling. The range of utilitarian forms is wide and diverse, but two products can illustrate the technology. The *pātil* is a hemispherical bowl used to cook rice and curry. Men throw the rim of the *pātil* on the *cāk*, while women shape the bottom in a *pārā* and then paddle the parts together. The *kalsī* is a globular jar in which water is carried on the hip. Men throw the *kalsī* in two sections and then paddle them into unity. Women raise the *kalsī* in three different *pārā* completing the form with three applied coils. The vessels are slipped and then fired. The kiln, the *puin*, has a clay-firing chamber with a concave top on which pots are piled, then covered with rice straw and mud. The chamber is stoked with wood; the heat reaches 800 degrees centigrade, and firing lasts for two or three days, depending upon the thickness of the ware. If the fire is smothered, the pots will emerge blackened from the kiln, their surfaces mottled from silver to sooty black. If holes are poked through the cover, oxygen increases in the kiln, and the fired pots are buff in color. On both black and buff pots, the slip and the firing create variations in tone and sheen, adding, at much expense of labor, decorative qualities to useful objects.

Two main techniques are used in shaping images for worship. For small *mūrti*, clay is pressed into deep molds, and then the image is smoothed and painted. For larger images, a frame is constructed of wood. It is covered with rice straw, bound with twine into form, and then coated with clay. The final form is achieved by a blend of hand-modeling and molding. Molds are used for crowns, faces, and ornaments, while the body of the deity, the expressive hands, and ancillary forms, such as the *bāhan* (the vehicle of the deity) are shaped by hand. While the form is shaped, the sculptor consistently draws it away from the world and urges it toward the ideal; the deity sits in placid symmetry, in a moment of fecund youth; the parts fuse in unity. That unity is then confirmed by thick coats of bright paint.

The repertory of images is dominated by the goddesses who center veneration in Bangladesh: Durgā, Kālī, Sarasvatī, and Lakṣmī. Images often present the family of the Goddess: Durgā, calmly slaying the buffalo demon, accompanied by her daughters, Sarasvatī, the goddess of wisdom, and Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth, and her sons, Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed lord of beginnings, and Kārttikeya, the beautiful god of war. Other frequently represented deities include 'Sītālā, the goddess of smallpox, and Manasā, the goddess of snakes. The prime images of Vaishnavism are Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, swaying together to the sounds of Kṛṣṇa's flute, and Gaurāṅga—the Bengali mystic Caitanya (1486–1533)—and his disciple Nītāi.

This dukha song, like those recorded in India, contains an explicit critique of male privilege. In their dukha songs women challenge ideologies and practices that place them in disadvantaged and vulnerable positions vis-à-vis men. They attribute their problems to abusive husbands, unkind in-laws, jealous co-wives and sisters-in-law, and parents' favoring sons over daughters. In both India and Nepal images of the ideal and docile wife are questioned in the texts of Tīj songs. Women characters in the songs recount and redress injustices against them, and provide a moral evaluation of the malefactors.

After the 1991 revolution in Nepal, political songs became more predominant in the Tīj festival. Women (and some men) composed songs that were critical of governmental politics and in favor of women's rights. Although dukha songs share accounts of injustices and inequalities with rājñīti songs, the latter are more revolutionary in content. Talk of exploitation and calls to action are more explicit. An excerpt from a rājñīti song composed by a Nepali girl of thirteen follows.

Listen sisters, listen society,
 Today I am going to speak about tyranny over women.
 The male and female born from the same womb,
 Do not have equal rights.
 The son gets the ancestral property at the age of fourteen,
 Whereas the daughter has to get married when she is only
 twelve
 Parents send the son to school,
 Whereas they are afraid to provide education to the
 daughter.
 Father bought books and pens for my younger brother,
 Whereas he wove a basket [for carrying loads] for me, the
 daughter
 We women are also energetic and want justice,
 We also have the right to hold a job. . . .
 We women are always deprived in Nepal.
 Women have even climbed Mt. Everest and reached the
 moon,
 Women have done so many things in this world.
 Women of other countries are pilots.
 We Nepalese women will be happy if we get the chance
 to be great women.
 Therefore, women of Nepal, this is not the time to be
 silent,
 Let's fight to obtain our rights. (Skinner and Holland 1996:
 286–287)

In Nepal political Tīj songs chronicle abuses by those in power, their exploitation of women and the poor, the treacheries of political parties, and the violence perpetrated in other countries by political regimes.

Although performed in a ritual space where an ideal Hindu femininity is represented, Tīj songs—whether about hardships or politics—contest this ideal, chal-

lenging male privileges and governmental policies and practices. They provide a critical voice on the social and political world, and are a basis for women's critical self-consciousness and social action. For as long as women can remember, both dukha and rājñīti songs have been in the Tīj repertoire, providing a critical commentary on women's lives, and visions of alternative femininities and subjectivities.

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DEBRA SKINNER

SEE ALSO

Gender and Folklore; Song

TILES AND TILE MAKING, TERRA-COTTA

The oldest terra-cotta tiles on the Indian subcontinent date to the Indus Valley civilization (2600–1900 B.C.E.), where they were used as flooring. At the site of Balakot, located west of Karachi, Pakistan, a small room had a floor of tiles with an impressed design of intersecting

circles. During the Vedic period (roughly 1800–800 B.C.E.) flat tiles in square or triangular shapes were used by Brahmanic priests to construct ritual platforms for the *agnichayana* ritual sacrifice. Miniature tiles incised with sacred lines were used to make smaller household sacrificial altars.

Terra-cotta tiles with molded scenes from the life of the Buddha were used to decorate stūpas during the early historic period (300 B.C.E.–300 C.E.). Plaster or stucco tiles were used to decorate religious buildings of both Buddhist and Hindu sects. One of the regions most famous for sculptural terra-cotta tiles was Bengal during the eleventh century. The temples of Bishnupur are particularly well known for the narrative scenes depicted on terra-cotta tiles. Similar tile-making traditions continue to be practiced in many parts of the subcontinent, particularly Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Famous glazed terra-cotta tiles come from Pakistan and northern India. Designs painted in blue, blue-green, black, and yellow are quite common. Tiles with geometric and calligraphic designs are used almost exclusively for Muslim tombs and mosques, while figurative designs are found on Hindu temples and palaces. Many scholars attribute the specific technology of making glazed terra-cotta tiles to workmen brought to the subcontinent from Iran or elsewhere in western Asia between roughly 700 and 1400 C.E. However, glazing technology was used during the early historic period (300 B.C.E.–300 C.E.) to produce glass bangles as well as glass utensils and glazed tiles. At present the most famous tile-making centers in Pakistan are at Multan and Hala, while in northern India they are scattered between Delhi and Agra.

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SEE ALSO

Material Culture; Pottery; Stūpa

TIRUVĀTIRA

Tiruvātira is a traditional festival of Kerala in which high-caste women commemorate the death of Kāmadēvan, the god of sexual love. Characterized by bathing, singing, playing, and feasting, *Tiruvātira* is

performed by virgin girls in order to get husbands and by married women to achieve a happy marital life. The mythological event commemorated in the festival is the burning of the god of lust, Kāma, by the fire of Śiva's third eye. Śiva's wife Pārvati enlisted Kāma's help to distract Śiva from his ascetic meditations so that he might fulfil his marital duties toward her as a lover. In his anger on being disturbed, Śiva opened his third eye and burned Kāma. On *Tiruvātira* day Śiva gives rebirth to Kāma on hearing the mournful cries of lust of the bathing women. Thus the main theme of the festival is fertility and auspicious marital sexuality.

On the day of *Tiruvātira*, said to be Śiva's birth star, in the winter month of Dhanu (December–January), young women of the matrilineal Nāyar caste awake well before dawn and go to the nearest bathing tank or river together to bathe. While in the water, the women sing *Tiruvātira pāṭṭu*, songs about the marital relations of Śiva and Pārvati and the god of love, while beating the water in a unique style with the hands. The left hand is cupped under the water and struck obliquely with the right, causing a large splash and a deep noise. This rhythmic singing and beating of the water symbolizes the women's mournful beating of their breasts upon hearing of Kāma's death. With great enjoyment the women play in the water and then return home to decorate themselves with eye-black, flowers, sandal-paste, and other cosmetics. The women sing, dance, and play games all day, taking rest from household chores. The chief entertainment is swinging from a bamboo swing. Until evening, the women refrain from eating rice, the ordinary staple food of their diet, taking only fruits and water. At night they enjoy a feast prepared from plantains, tubers, and cereals.

The singing, bathing, swinging, dancing, playing, and eating of phallic shaped foods all celebrate the women's auspicious connection to married sexual life and fertility. On *Tiruvātira*, men must do all household work, including cooking, and must serve the ladies in the evening. Husbands are also required to be present in their wives' bedchambers without fail in the evening for sexual enjoyment.

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SEE ALSO

Fairs and Festivals; Gender and Folklore; Kerala; Śiva