

The Pearl in Sanskrit Literature

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Since ancient times the pearl¹⁾ has been used in India as an article of personal adornment, and it is evident from the etymologies of the Sanskrit words *alamkāra*, *ābharāṇa* and *bhūṣaṇa*, signifying “ornament” or “decoration,” that the use of personal accessories was rooted in the belief that they had the effect of protecting one’s person, warding off evil, and attracting good luck.²⁾ The pearl was no exception,³⁾ and it possessed outstanding qualities, bringing sons, wealth, fortune and renown to its owner.⁴⁾ In particular, the pearl taken from the hood of a snake, if worn by kings, was believed to counteract poison, alleviate fever,⁵⁾ banish misfortune, defeat enemies, bring fame, and bestow victory.⁶⁾ In the following we shall discuss the different types of pearls and their sources as they appear in Classical Sanskrit literature.

I

In the section entitled “Kośapraveśya-ratnaparīkṣā,” Kauṭilya enumerates the following ten localities for the pearl-fishery and its three sources (*yoni*):

*tāmraparṇikam pāṇdyakavāṭakam pāsikyam kauleyam caurneyam māhendram
kārdamikam srautasiyam hrāḍiyam haimavatam ca mauktikam (2) śaktiḥ śaṅkhaḥ
prakīrṇakam ca yonayah (Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra 2.11.3)*

“That from the Tāmraparṇī,⁷⁾ that from Pāṇdyakavāṭa, that from the Pāsikā, that from the Kulā, that from the Cūrṇī, that from [Mt.] Mahendra, that from the Kardamā, that from Srotasī, that from the Lake and that from the Himavat, these are pearls. The shell, the conch and miscellaneous are the sources [of pearls].”⁸⁾

A similar list of eight localities is given in *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 81.2 and elsewhere,⁹⁾ but the sources (*yoni*) are further specified and extended to eight in technical treatises on Ratna-parīkṣā.¹⁰⁾ Thus, *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 80.1 reads:

*dvīpa-bhujaga-śukti-śaṅkhābhra-veṇu-timi-sūkara-prasūtāni muktāphalāni
teṣāṃ bahu sādhu ca śuktijam bhavati*

“Pearls are born of the elephant, serpent, pearl-oyster, conch-shell, cloud, bamboo, fish and boar. Of these, that born of the pearl-oyster is valued.”

The same text continues to explain in detail these different types of pearls.¹¹⁾

Among these, firstly, those originating in the frontal lobes (*kumbha*) and sockets of the tusks (*sa-rada-kośa*) of the elephants of the Airāvata family, etc., are plentiful (*bahu*), of large size (*br̥hat-pramāṇa*), of many shapes (*bahu-saṁsthāna*), and full of lustre (*prabhā-yukta*). They are furnished with a great purificatory power, and if carried by kings, they bring them sons, victory and health.¹²⁾

The pearl born of the conch-shell is of the colour of the moon (*śāsi-nibha*), round in shape (*vr̥tta*), lustrous (*bhr̥jīṣṇu*), and beautiful (*rucira*),¹³⁾ but according to the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* its colour corresponds to that of the inside of the shell.¹⁴⁾ These two kinds of pearls, from elephants and shells, were, however, considered to be the most inferior in quality.¹⁵⁾

The pearl produced by fish (*matsya* or *timi*) resembles a fish's eye (*akṣi-nibha*), is large, and has a purifying effect.¹⁶⁾ But according to the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, it has the colour of the fish's back (*pr̥sthā*) and is round in shape (*svvr̥tta*), light (*laghu*), and very delicate (*atisūkṣma*).¹⁷⁾

Pearls from the root of a boar's tusk are the same colour as the tusk and have the beauty of moon-light, although they are readily obtainable.¹⁸⁾

Pearls produced from bamboo are the colour of camphor or crystal and are flat but not smooth,¹⁹⁾ while according to the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* they have the colour of hailstones (*varṣopala*) and cannot be found just anywhere, since these bamboos grow only in a place frequented by fortunate men (*bhavya-janopabhogyasthāna*).²⁰⁾ Though it is said that a tiny raindrop develops into a pearl in a cavity in old bamboo,²¹⁾ often this type of pearl is alluded to in the expression *vaṁṣe maṇi*, when it is used to describe one who raises his family's honour.²²⁾

Pearls produced in the clouds originate from the seventh layer of wind in the manner of hailstones, and they are said to have the brilliance of lightning and to be seized by the denizens of heaven as they fall from the sky.²³⁾

The serpents of the lineage of Takṣaka and Vāsuki and those that move at will have unctuous and blue-tinged (*nīla-dyuti*) pearls on their hoods.²⁴⁾ They are also believed to bring about rain.²⁵⁾ According to some technical treatises, they are of the colour and lustre of a sword-blade (*nistrīṃśa-dhārā-samavarṇa-dīpti*) or of the moon (*śāsi-suprabhā*). They are also furnished with magical power, increasing the well-being of their possessor.²⁶⁾

The above kinds of pearls are all of mysterious origins,²⁷⁾ whereas pearls produced from pearl-oysters are said to be abundant²⁸⁾ and are held in high regard.²⁹⁾ While the preceding seven types cannot be perforated, this alone can be perforated.³⁰⁾

Among these eight sorts of pearls, those of elephants,³¹⁾ serpents³²⁾ and pearl-oysters figure as important and recurring motifs in Classical Sanskrit literature.³³⁾ It is to these that we shall now turn our attention.

II The Snake-Jewel

While the *Ratnaparikṣā* tradition, as represented by the *Bṛhat-saṃhitā*, enumerates the snake (*bhujaga*) among the eight sources of the pearl (*muktāphala*), the actual literary tradition of Sanskrit poetry never indicates that the snake-jewel is a pearl,³⁴ for it always uses the words *ratna* (jewel), *maṇi* (gem) or *utpala* (stone), but never *muktā*, *muktā-phala* or *mauktika*.³⁵ It is on this account that we shall use hereafter the word “snake-jewel (*ratna*, *maṇi*)” instead of “snake-pearl.” Furthermore, according to the śāstric tradition of the *Ratnaparikṣā*, the colour of the snake-jewel is described as “blue” (*nila-viśuddha*, *nila-dyuti*), whereas Sanskrit poets always call it “reddish.” Again, the magic powers that are attributed to the snake-jewel by the *Ratnaparikṣā* texts are not at all mentioned by the poets. These three points were elucidated by P. Gaeffke almost half a century ago.³⁶

(2-1) In Kāvya literature, the jewel (*maṇi*, *ratna*) is listed as one of the distinguishing characteristics of a serpent. For example, when pointing out the error of Garuḍa in having captured Jīmūtavāhana, the snake Śaṅkhacūḍa, insisting on his own identity, says to Garuḍa:

*āstāṃ svastika-lakṣma vakṣasi tanau nālokyate kañcuko
jihve jalpata eva me na gaṇite nāma tvayā dve api
tisras tīvra-viśāgni-dhūma-patala-vyājihma-ratna-tviṣo
naitā dussaha-śoka-phūtkṛta-marut-sphītāḥ phaṇāḥ paśyasi* (*Nāgānanda* 5.18)

“Leaving aside the sign of the *svastika* on my chest, do you not behold the slough (*kañcuka*) on my body? When I speak, you do not notice that I have two tongues (*jihve dve*)? And do you not see these three hoods (*phaṇa*), bright with gems smouldering with the fire of virulent poison (*viṣa*) and swollen with wind groaning from insufferable grief?”³⁷

The jewel (*ratna*) is thus enumerated as one of the snake’s characteristic features together with its slough, two tongues,³⁸ hood, poison,³⁹ and hissing wind.⁴⁰

(2-2) Among these distinctive features, the jewel holds the most prominent position. Thus, it is said that even though other features may be indistinct, it is still possible to identify it as a serpent on account of the jewel shining brightly on its hood:

*velānilāya prasrītā bhujāṅgā mahormi-visphūrjathu-nirviśeṣāḥ
sūryāmsu-samparka-samṛddha-rāgair vyajyanta ete maṇibhiḥ phaṇasthaiḥ*
(*Raghuvamśa* 13.12)

“Serpents come forth in search of the coastal breeze⁴¹ may be difficult to

discern because of the thundering waves, but they can be recognized on account of the gems on their hoods, their colours enhanced by the rays of the sun.”

(2-3) This prominent feature is in fact characterized by its lustre.⁴²⁾ Thus, in the netherworld (*pātāla*), which is shrouded in darkness, the serpents are to be marked out by the rays of lustre emitted by the jewels on their heads. In a verse which contains a double entendre (*bhujāṅga*: snake and paramour),⁴³⁾ we read:

*asmin prakīrṇa-ṭaṭavāsa-kṛtāndhakāre dr̥ṣṭo manān maṇi-vibhūṣaṇa-raśmi-jālaiḥ
pātālam udyata-phaṇākṛti-śrīṅako 'yaṃ mām adya saṃsamarayatīva bhujāṅga-lokaḥ
(Ratnāvalī 1.12)*

“This crowd of gallants (snakes) lifting up syringes resembling the hoods of snakes, and dimly visible in the enmassed rays of jewelled ornaments in this gloom produced by fragrant powder scattered about, reminds me now of the netherworld.”

Hence, its construction with *dyotita* and *pradīpta*. The god Viṣṇu seated on Śeṣa is described as follows:

*bhogi-bhogāsanāsīnaṃ dadṛśus taṃ divaukasah
tat-phaṇā-maṇḍalodarcir-maṇi-dyotita-vigrahaṃ (Raghuvamśa 10.7)*

“Reclining on the seat (throne) that is a serpent’s body, the gods beheld him (Viṣṇu) as his body was illuminated by the luminous gems on its expansive hoods.”

Similarly, the demon Tāraka is attended by snakes headed by Vāsuki:

*jvalan-maṇi-śikhāś cainaṃ vāsuki-pramukhā nīsi
sthira-pradīptam etya bhujāṅgāḥ paryupāsate (Kumārasambhava 2.38)*

“The serpents led by Vāsuki serve him with steadily burning lamps in the form of their flashing crest-gems.”⁴⁴⁾

Serpents, their hoods adorned with a jewel (*ratna*), are further likened to seers whose heads are crowned with gems (*maṇi*). In a passage from the *Kādambarī* describing a tranquil scene in which even the unbelieving animals gathered round a temple appear to be worshipping the goddess, we read:

*prabala-kūrca-dharaiś chāgair api dhṛta-vratair iva, sphurad-adhara-ṭuṭair ākhubhir
api japa-parair iva, kṛṣṇājina-prāvṛtāṅgaiḥ kuraṅgair api pratīṣayanair iva, jvalita-lo-
hita-mūrdha-ratna-raśmibhiḥ kṛṣṇa-sarṭpair api śiro-dhṛta-maṇi-dīpakair ivārādhyā-
mānām... (Kādambarī, p. 397, lines 8-10)*

“She was being worshipped by bearded goats who resembled ascetics holding vows, rats whose mouths moved as if engaged in prayer, deer, their bodies covered with black hides, who seemed to kneel in homage, and black serpents resplendent with blazing red jewels on their heads who were like seers shining with gems on their heads.”⁴⁵⁾

(2-4) The superiority of the jewel to the snake’s other features is also indicated by its “immutability.” Even when the whole body (*śarīra*) of a snake undergoes a transformation, the gem alone remains “unchanged”:

*yathā-pradeśaṃ bhujageśvarānāṃ karisyatām ābharaṇāntaratvam
śarīra-mātraṃ vikṛtiṃ prapade tathaiva tasthuḥ phaṇa-ratna-śobhāḥ*
(*Kumārasambhava* 7.34)

“While the serpent-lords tried to adorn themselves variously according to their parts, only their body took another form, but their beauty remained the same as regards the gem on their hoods.”⁴⁶⁾

(2-5) The jewel is not only the distinctive feature of a snake, but is also its essential property. The snake-king Maṇikaṇṭha gives a flat refusal to a Brahmin who has demanded his jewel (Maṇikaṇṭha-jātaka):

tan te na dassam atiyācako si na cāpi te assamam āgamissam (J.253.1 and 2cd)
“I will not give this to you; you are asking too much. Nor will I come any more to your hermitage.”

And the story ends with the following verse,

nāgo maṇiṃ yācito brāhmaṇena adassanaṃ yeva tad’ ajjhagama (J.253.3cd)
“No sooner had the serpent been asked for the jewel by the Brahmin than it disappeared.”

Under such circumstances, it is only on some rare occasion that a serpent parts with its jewel. Varuṇa, a snake-king, gives his *maṇi* to the Bodhisatta Vidhura as a reward for a lesson on the *dhamma*. In his reply to his wife’s question, Varuṇa says:

*...vidhuraṇḍitaṃ dhamma-kathaṃ sutvā pasanna-citto aham tena maṇinā taṃ
pūjesim* (J. 6. 262. 5-7)
“Listening to his discourse on the *dhamma*, my mind became cleansed and thus I honoured him with this jewel of mine.”⁴⁷⁾

(2-6) However, the presence of a brilliant jewel (*maṇi*) in the terror-evoking

snake (*ahi*) arouses among Hindu poets a sense of absolute incompatibility. Thus it is said,⁴⁸⁾

*kauśeyam kṛmitaḥ suvarṇam upalād dūrvāpi golomataḥ
pañkāt tāmarasaṃ śaśāṅka udadher indīvaram gomayāt
kāṣṭhād agnir aheḥ phaṇād api maṇir gopittato rocanā
jātā loka-mahārghatām nija-guṇaiḥ prāptās ca kiṃ janmanā* (IS. 1958)

“Silk comes from worms, gold from stones, *dūrvā*-grass from cow’s hair, the red lotus from mud, the moon from the sea, the blue lotus from cow-dung, fire from a stick, a jewel from a snake-hood, and the yellow pigment *rocanā* from cow’s bile. All these are highly appreciated among people because of their own excellence. Of what account is their origin?”

This incompatibility is responsible for the production of further contrasts of various sorts.

(2-6-1) The contrast between the “agreeable” and the “fearsome.”

*nāma rāma iti tulyam ātmaje vartamānam ahite ca dāruṇe
hr̥dyam asya bhaya-dāyi cābhavad ratna-jātam iva hāra-sarṇpayoḥ
(Raghuvamśa 11. 68)*

“The name Rāma, which was equally applicable both to his own son as well as to that formidable foe, became pleasing as well as fear-inspiring, just as a gem in a necklace (*hāra*) and on [the hood of] a serpent [inspire joy and fear simultaneously].”

(2-6-2) The contrast of “beauty” and “terror.”

*durjanaḥ parihartavyo vidyayālamkṛto ’pi san
maṇinā bhūṣitaḥ sarṇaḥ kim asau na bhayaṃkaraḥ* (IS. 2850)

“A villain is to be shunned, even if he were adorned with wisdom: Does not the serpent inspire terror, albeit he be embellished with a jewel?” (Vogel, p.25)

(2-6-3) Under such circumstances, the acquisition of a jewel from a snake-hood is an example of rare courage. Seizing the jewel from a snake⁴⁹⁾ was regarded as a task of utmost difficulty.⁵⁰⁾

*sarpasyeva śiro-ratnaṃ nāsya śakti-trayaṃ paraḥ
sa cakaraṣa paraṃmāt tad ayaskānta ivāyasam* (Raghuvamśa 17. 63)

“The enemy was unable to seize this king’s three powers⁵¹⁾ just as one cannot take the jewel on the head of a serpent, while he was able to wrest the

three powers away from the enemy just as a loadstone attracts iron."⁵²⁾

Here that which is easy to obtain is compared to iron attracted by a magnet, while that which is difficult to obtain is likened to a jewel taken from a snake.

In the *Kirātārjunīya* Arjuna, although prepared to endure insults, vows not to relinquish his arrow to the enemy:

*mayā mrgān hantur anena hetunā viruddham ākṣepa-vacas titikṣitam
sarārtham eṣyaty atha lapsyate gatiṃ śiro-maṇiṃ dṛṣṭi-viṣān jighrṁkṣataḥ
(Kirātārjunīya 14. 25)*

“For this reason I endure the Kirāta’s hostile abuse, but should he come for my arrow, he will then get the deserts of one wishing to take from a snake the jewel on its head.”

III The Elephant Pearl (*gaja-mauktika*)

Unlike the serpent-jewel, which is never called *muktā*, *muktāphala* or *mauktika* by Hindu poets, in the case of the elephant pearl we have such compounds as *gaja-mauktika* and *gaja-rāja-muktā* (IS. 1616). However, here again the *śāstra* tradition and poetic tradition differ from each other. That is to say, whereas poets often refer to elephant pearls, the texts on *Gaja-śāstra*, such as the *Mātāṅgalīlā*, *Hastividyaṛṇava*, and *Hastyaurveda* do not mention the occurrence of pearls in the elephant's body.⁵³⁾ It is further said that not all elephants are in possession of pearls.

*śaile śaile na māṇikyam mauktikam na gaje gaje
sādhavo na hi sarvatra candanam na vane vane* (IS. 6523)

“There is not a jewel in each and every mountain, nor a pearl in each and every elephant. Good men are not everywhere, and the sandal-tree is not found in each and every wood.”

According to *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 80.20, elephants born in the race of the Airāvata on auspicious days are called *bhadra*-s, and pearls found in their frontal lobes are particularly valuable.⁵⁴⁾ However, as we saw earlier, they are inferior in quality to those from the heads of snakes, being yellowish in colour and coarse.⁵⁵⁾ Furthermore, they invariably appear in multiples, and it is often described how they gush forth from the elephant’s broad forehead. They thus lack the rarity of a serpent’s pearl.⁵⁶⁾

(3-1) The manner in which elephants use their trunks to shower themselves with water so as to cool themselves resembles the way in which pearls spring

forth from their foreheads:

*ālola-ṣuṣkara-mukhollasitair abhikṣṇam ukṣāṃ babbhūvur abhito vapur ambu-varṣaiḥ
khedāyata-śvasita-vega-nirasta-mugdha-mūrdhanya-ratna-nikarair iva hāstikāni
(Śiṣupālavadhā 5.30)*

“Using their moving trunks, the herds of elephants constantly sprinkled their bodies with showers of water⁵⁷⁾ resembling the masses of gems (*ratna*) from their heads scattered far and wide by the force of a long sigh of exhaustion.”

(3-2) But it would seem that these pearls are more likely to spring forth when the elephant’s forehead has been struck by a sword or mauled by a lion’s claws.

(3-2-1) In a battle between gods and demons, we read:

*śastra-bhinnebha-kumbhebhyo mauktikāni cyutāny adhaḥ
adhyāhava-kṣetram upta-kīrti-bījānkura-śriyam (Kumārasambhava 16. 22)*

“Pearls that dropped down from the elephant’s frontal lobe, rent with swords, beautified the battlefield sown with the sprouts of the seeds of fame.⁵⁸⁾”

Again, in a battle between Mṛgānkadatta and Karmasena we read:

*khaṅgāhatebha-kumbhottho babhau muktāphalotkaraḥ
saṃrambha-truṭīto hāra iva tat-samara-śriyaḥ (KSS.103.6)*

“The heap of pearls as they sprang from the frontal lobes of elephants struck with swords looked like the necklace of that battle’s Fortune (*śrī*) broken in her agitation.”

In describing the valour of the king Śūdraka, Bāṇa says:

*yasya ca madakala-kari-kumbha-pīṭha-pāṭanaṃ vidadhato lagna-sthūla-muktāphalena
dṛḍha-muṣṭi-niṣīdanān niṣṭhyūta-dhārā-jalabindu-dantureṇeva kṛpāṇenākṛṣyamāṇā.....
rāja-śriḥ (Kādambarī, p.10, lines 1-4)*

“The goddess of royal fortune (*rāja-śrī*), who was attracted, as it were, by his sword, which was covered with waterdrops that exuded from stout pearls that stuck to it by squeezing with a firm fist as he cleft open with it the frontal lobes of rut elephants.”

(3-2-2) However, more frequently elephant pearls are referred to in connection with a lion that mauls the elephant’s face with its claws.⁵⁹⁾ Lions attack elephants with their sharp claws, thereby causing the pearls to fall to the ground.

The Vindhya range, home to lions, is described thus:

sarabhasa-kesari-sahasra-khara-nakhara-dhārā-vidārīta-matta-mātaṅga-kumbha-sthala-vigalita (sthūla)-muktāphala(-śabala)-śikharatayā (śikharāva) lagnaṃ tārāgaṇam ivodvahan....(Vāsavadattā 85)

“The summit was tinged with the colours of coarse pearls that had gushed forth from the frontal lobes of excited elephants, split open by the showers of sharp claws of thousands of impetuous lions, and it was as if the mountains held a multitude of stars suspended from the summit.”

(3-2-2-1) After they have pierced the elephant’s frontal lobe and extracted pearls therefrom, lions are believed to keep the elephant’s pearls in their claws. In a description of the forest on Vindhya Mountain (*vindhyātavī*), we read:

nakha-mukha-lagnebha-kumbha-muktāphala-lubdhair śabara-senāpatibhir abhīhanyamāna-kesari-śatā (Kādambarī, p.38, lines 6-8)

“Here hundreds of lions are killed by the Śabarās’ chiefs, who are eager to possess pearls from the frontal lobes of elephants, which cling to the tips of their (viz. lions’) claws.”

Similarly, we read in the *Raghuvamśa*:

tān hatvā gajakula-baddha-tivra-vairān kākutsthaḥ kuṭila-nakhāgra-lagna-muktān ātmānaṃ raṇa-kṛtakarmaṇāṃ gajānām ānrṇyaṃ gatam iva mārgaṇair amamsta (Raghuvamśa 9.65)

“Having killed them (viz. lions) who bore an implacable animosity towards the race of elephants and who had pearls stuck to the tip of their crooked claws, Rāma considered himself free of debt⁽⁶⁰⁾ with his arrows to the elephants that had assisted him in battle.”

In the king Vikramasimha’s forest-hunting we read:

tām sa vikrama-bijābhair mahim tastāra mauktikair śiṃhānām hasti-hantṛṇām nihātānām nakha-cyutair (KSS. 27. 155)

“He strewed the ground with pearls fallen from the claws of elephant-slaying lions whom he had killed, resembling the seeds of his prowess.”

(3-2-2-2) Meanwhile, the pearls from the elephant’s forehead that drop from the lion’s claws as he moves along serve as waymarks for hunters on his trail. According to the famous *Kumārasambhava* and its magnificent depiction of the Himālayas:

*padam tuṣāra-sruti-dhauta-raktam yasminn adṛṣṭvāpi hata-dvipānām
vidanti mārḡam nakha-randhra-muktair muktāphalaih kesariṇām kirātāḥ*
(*Kumārasaṃbhava* 1.6)

“Where, even though they do not see the spoors washed clear of blood by rivulets of snow, the Kirātas know the trail of lions that have killed elephants by pearls dropped from the interstices of their claws.”

Likewise, as they move through the forest, some Śābaras make the passing comment that:

*eṣa nakha-koṭi-vikaṭa-vilikhita-patra-lekho rudhira-pāṭalah kari-mauktika-dala-dan-
turo mrgapati-mārḡaḥ* (*Kādambari* p.55, lines 7-8)

“Lined with leaves greatly rent by claws and scattered with blood-red fragments of elephants’ pearls, this is indeed a path frequented by lions.”

(3-2-2-3) The lion returns to his den with these pearls embedded in his claws, and so the caves where lions live are full of pearls:

*gamyate yadi mrgendra-mandiraṃ labhyate kari-kapola-mauktikam
gamyate yadi ca kukkurālayaṃ labhyate ’sthi-khura-puccha-saṃcayaḥ* (*IS.* 2087)

“If one visits a lion’s abode, he finds a pearl from the elephant’s frontal lobe. If one visits a dog’s abode, he finds a heap of bones, hooves and tails.”

*ucchidya vidviṣa iva prasabhaṃ mrgendrān indrānujānucara-bhūpatayo ’dhyavātsuḥ
vanyebha-mastaka-nikhāta-nakhāgra-mukta-muktāphala-prakarabhāñji guhā-grhāṇi*
(*Śisupālavadha* 5.12)

“Having slaughtered lions forcibly as if they were their adversaries, those kings who depended upon Hari settled in the cave-houses that contained multitudes of pearls delivered from the tips of their claws that had mauled the frontal lobes of wild elephants.”

(3-2-3) Pearls from elephants thus mauled by lions’ claws are often tinged with blood. Elephant pearls imbued with blood-red are compared to pomegranate seeds and sometimes to jujubes.

In reply to the king, Vaiśampāyana answered as follows:

*hari-nakhara-bhinna-matta-mātaṅga-kumbha-mukta-raktārḍra-muktāphala-tviṣi
khaṇḍitāni dāḍima-bījāni* (*Kādambari* p.36, lines 7-8)

“I have cracked pomegranate seeds, glowing like pearls wet with the blood that a lion’s claws have torn from the frontal lobes of rutting elephants.”

The women of some mountain tribes mistake the elephant pearl for a jujube.

*siṃha-kṣuṇṇa-karīndra-kumbha-galitaṃ raktākta-muktāphalaṃ
kāntāre badarī-dhiyā drutam agād bhillasya patnī mudā
pāṇibhyāṃ upagrhya sukla-kaṭhinam tad vikṣya dūre jahāv
asthāne patatām ativa mahatām etādrśi syād gatiḥ
(IS. 7038)*

“A Bhilla wife in the forest approached with joy a pearl, stained with blood, which had fallen from an elephant’s frontal lobe torn by a lion, thinking it to be a jujube. Afterwards she took it in her hands and found that it was white and hard, and she abandoned it. Such would be the course of the really valuable, when they came into the hand of the unsuitable.”

The same elephant pearls tinged with blood (*vanakari-kumbha-vidalita-rakta-muktāphalāni rudhirārūṇāni*) appear also in the *Kādambarī*. Cooks (*krkavāku*) approach them, thinking them to be *bali-siktha-s*, but later abandon them, and lion cubs play with them in their turn.⁶¹⁾

Here we may note that *gaja-mauktika-s* tinged with blood look like pomegranate seeds (*dāḍima-bīja*) or jujubes (*badarī*), or are sometimes even compared to a lump of boiled rice for offering (*bali-siktha*).⁶²⁾

(3-3) As we have seen in the above, these elephants’ pearls have a special connection with mountain tribes such as the Śabara, Kirāta and Bhilla. There is a story of a prince of the Śabarās, hunting in the Himālayas in order to obtain pearls from the heads of elephants.

*ahaṃ bhavānī-pādaika-śaraṇaḥ śabarādhipaḥ
āgato ’smi ca mātaṅga-muktā-hetor idaṃ vanam (KSS. 22. 88)*

“I am a prince of the Śabarās who regards the feet of Bhavānī as his only refuge, and I have come to this wood to obtain pearls from the heads of elephants.” (Cf. 22. 76).

(3-4) Apparently, pearls (*muktāphala*) are the most valued things that wild elephants possess.⁶³⁾ But women of mountain tribes (Kirāta or Bhilla) are often unaware of their value.

*na veti yo yasya guṇa-prakarṣaṃ sa taṃ sadā nindati nātra citram.
yathā kirātī kari-kumbha-labdhaṃ muktāphalaṃ tyajya bibharti guṇjām (IS. 3445)*

“He who does not know the excellence of somebody constantly blames him. There is nothing strange about this. It is like a Kirāta woman who abandons a pearl gained from an elephant’s frontal lobe and takes only a

guñja berry."⁶⁴)

(3-5) As we have already seen in Subandhu's description of the Vindhya range, the pearls embedded in an elephant's frontal lobes, set against its broad forehead, are compared to stars sparkling in the night sky:

*kurvan jyostnā-viprusām tulya-rūpas tāras tāra-jāla-sārām iva dyām
khaṅgāghātair dāritād danti-kumbhād ābhāti sma procchalan mauktikaughah
(Śiśupālavadha 18. 44)*

"The stream of radiant pearls, like drops of moonlight, gushes forth from the elephant's frontal lobes split open by the blows of a sword and shines as if to fill the sky with stars."

The Sanskrit compound *nakṣatra-mālā*, which etymologically means "a group of stars, garland of constellations" and is also used in the sense of a kind of neck-ornament of elephants, may have had something to do with pearls shining like stars in the frontal lobe of the elephant.⁶⁵)

(3-6) Occasionally the same elephant's frontal lobe is compared to the ocean, which also contains pearls:

*vāridher iva karāgra-vicibhir diṅ-mataṅgaja-mukhāny abhighnataḥ
yasya cāru-nakha-śuktayaḥ sphuran mauktika-prakara-garbhātām dadhuḥ
(Śiśupālavadha 14. 73)*

"The claws of the lion that had mauled the faces of the elephants of the four directions with the tips of its paws had lovely pearls just as the ocean stroking the faces of the maidens of the quarters⁶⁶) with waves as its fingers⁶⁷) has pretty shells for fingernails that contain pearls."

*yasya ca niśīta-nārāca-(jarjharita-)matta-mātaṅga-kumbha-sthala-vigalita-muktāphala
(-nikara)-danturita-parisāre...sāgara iva samara-sīrasi... (Vāsavadattā 42)*

"A sea of conflict..., whose shores were covered with quantities of pearls fallen from must elephants' frontal lobes shattered by sharp arrows,..."

IV

The pearls that appear most frequently in Sanskrit literature are thus those from the serpent and the elephant, but it is also evident that these two differ considerably in their qualities.

Although the *Bṛhatsamhitā* and other texts attribute the source of pearls (*muktā*) to both the snake and the elephant, and both types are said to promise good luck and improved fortune, this is especially so in the case of a serpent's

gem (*maṇi*). They also differ in their relative rarity. The elephant's pearls appear in multiples and are likened to the stars glimmering in the night sky. This distinguishes them from the single gem that a snake possesses on its hood, characterized by its splendid lustre, illuminating things all around.

Again, the elephant's pearls are considered to fall to the ground when the elephant's forehead has been pierced by a weapon or lion's claws, while in the case of a snake's, said to be extremely difficult to acquire, there are no instances of their being described as lying scattered on the ground. Furthermore, while elephant pearls often come into the possession of mountain tribes, it is a matter of utmost difficulty and proof of rare courage to acquire the gem from a snake-hood. Snakes are rarely parted with their *maṇi*, and it is only in rare cases of granting a special favour that snakes present it to others. Furthermore, we do not find in the passages cited above that the snake's arch enemy Garuḍa ever attempts to obtain it,⁶⁸⁾ as the lion is eager to extract the elephant's pearls.

Possibly, the elephant's pearls were imagined to exist as an extension of its ivory tusks in its broad and dark frontal lobe, the contrast between white and black being comparable to stars in the night sky.⁶⁹⁾

V The Pearl-Oyster

Lastly, we shall bring this article to a close by quoting a passage from the touchingly beautiful *Harṣacarita* (p.250, lines 7ff.), in which Bāṇa uses his poetic skills to describe the origins of the pearls that form a necklace presented by the Buddhist monk Divākaramitra to King Harṣa.

*ayaṃ hi yauvanonmādāt paribhūya bhūyasir bhāryā yauvanāvātāra-tarala-tarās tārā-
rājo rajani-karṇa-pūrah purā puru-hūta-purodhaso dhiṣaṇasya puramdhrim dharmā-
patnīm patnīyann atitaralas tārām nāmāpajahāra/nākataś ca pālāyāṃ cakre/cakita-
cakora-locanayā ca tayā sahātikāmayā sarvākārābhīrāmāyā ramamāṇo ramanīyeṣu
deṣeṣu cacāra/cirāc ca katham cit sarva-gīr vāṇa-vāṇi-gauravād girām patyuh punar
api pratyarpayāṃ āsa tām/hrdaye tv anindhanam adahyata virahād varārohāyās
tasyāḥ satatam/ekadā tu śailād udayād udayamāno vimale vāriṇi varuṇālayasya
samkrātam ātmanah pratibimbam vilokitavān/drṣtvā ca tat tadā sasmarah sasmāra
smera-gaṇḍa-sthalasya tārāyā mukhasya/mumoca ca manmathonmāda-mathyamāna-
mānasah svastho 'py asvasthaḥ sthaviyasaḥ pīta-sakala-kumuda-vana-prabhā-pravāha-
dhavala-tārābhīyām iva locanābhīyām bāṣpa-vāri-bindūn/atha patatas tām udanvati
samastān evācemur muktā-śuktayāḥ/tāsām ca kuṅṣi-koṣeṣu muktāphalī-bhūtān avāpa
tām katham api rasātala-nivāsi vāsukir nāma viṣamucām īśah/sa ca tair muktāpha-
laiḥ pātālatala 'pi tārā-gaṇam iva darśayadbhir ekāvalim akalpayat/cakāra ca man-
dākinīti nāma tasyāḥ*

“Once, intoxicated with youth, the king of stars and ear-ornament of the night (viz. the moon), disregarding his many most charming wives, verita-

ble incarnations of youth, improperly took a fancy to the spouse and lawful wife, called Tārā, of Bṛhaspati, Indra's chief priest, and fled from heaven. She had timid eyes like the *cakora* bird (fabled to subsist on moonbeams),⁷⁰⁾ was most enamoured of him, and delighted him in all manner of ways, and together with her he wandered through pleasant realms enjoying himself. At length, however, out of respect for the words of all the gods, he restored her to the lord of speech (Bṛhaspati). But because of his separation from her of the fine hips, there constantly burnt in his heart a fuelless fire.⁷¹⁾ One day, as the moon was rising from the eastern mountain, he saw his own figure reflected on the untainted water of the ocean, and seeing it, overcome with memories, he recalled Tārā's countenance with her smiling cheeks. Not feeling himself even up in the sky, love-sick and troubled in mind,⁷²⁾ he shed tear-drops from his eyes,⁷³⁾ their pupils white from gazing at the stream of light from the *kumuda* flowers that open in the moonlight. Thereupon the pearl oysters in the sea drank them all as they fell.⁷⁴⁾ When they⁷⁵⁾ had turned into pearls inside the oysters,⁷⁶⁾ the lord of serpents, who lived in the underworld and was called Vāsuki, happened to obtain them, and with these pearls, which even in the netherworld looked like a multitude of stars, he made a necklace, which he called Mandākinī."

The story continues, with the monk Nāgārjuna⁷⁷⁾ being led to the nether regions by a *nāga*, where he asks Vāsuki for the necklace, which he then presents to his friend King Sātavāhana, and it is also related how it eventually came into the possession of Divākaramitra. But further details we must omit here, and instead let it suffice to take note of this romantic tale from classical India, according to which pearls were originally born from the tears⁷⁸⁾ shed by the moon pining after his beloved, but now parted, wife.⁷⁹⁾

Notes

*This is a revised and enlarged English version of an article for the *Festschrift Y.Kanakura* (1966), originally written in Japanese on the basis of Kāvya literature. Thanks are due to Mr. R.Giebel, who took the trouble to translate the original Japanese article into English and gave me many valuable suggestions.

- 1) *Muktā*, the Sanskrit word for "pearl," has its origin in the verb *mūrchatī* "coagulate, become solid," having evolved into *muktā* through the process of hyper-Sanskritization (cf. *mūrti*), and it is unrelated to the root *muc-*. *Phala*, too, originally meant "congelation" or "solidification" rather than "fruit," and therefore the term *muktā-phala* is, properly speaking, a tautology. In the Vedas it is chiefly the word *kṛṣana* that is used, and the genesis of the pearl is described in *Atharva-veda Samhitā* IV. 10. In former times the pearl was believed to originate in "thunder" and in the "sea" (AV. XIX. 30.5), and the bones of the gods are also said to be made of pearls. The belief that the pearl-oyster imbibed special raindrops to create pearls is preserved in later Sanskrit literature and appears in *Mālavikāgnimitra* 1.6, *Mṛcchakaṭīka* 5.45, etc. An excellent study of this subject is Lüders 1940. A Dravidian etymology has also been sug-

- gested for the word *muktā*: see Mayrhofer, p. 648 (Burrow-Emeneau 1961, p. 334a, No. 4064 and 1984 p. 444b, No. 4959).
- 2) Gonda 1939a, 1939b, and 1959.
 - 3) J.M.Campbell, "Notes on the Spirit Basis of Belief and Custom," *Indian Antiquary* 25 (1896), pp. 125-140; Lüders, p. 182. In the *Kuṣa-jātaka* we read of the power of the gem *jyotirasa*; see J.J. Jones, *The Mahāvastu*, vol. 2 (SBB XVII), p. 437, note 3 cum lit.
 - 4) Gaeffke, pp. 581 (Jātaka 524) and 588 (v). In MS. 7.218 the king is advised to carry it (*viśa-ghnāni ca ratnāni niyato dhārayet sadā*).
 - 5) In Sanskrit literature the pearl is often counted among the coolants used to alleviate the fever of a lovesick person. See, e.g., *Kādambārī*, p. 213, line 2 (*muktāphala-jālin*), p. 440, line 10 (*vidalita-muktāphala-vālukā-paṭala*), p. 599, line 10 (*muktā-dāmāni*); *Vāsavadattā* 157 (*muktā-cūrṇa-nikara*).
 - 6) BS.80.22 (*suta-vijayārogyakarā...*), 80.27 (*apaharati viṣam alakṣmīm kṣapayati śatrūn yaśo vikāsayati...vijaya-dam*), 80.30 (*sutārtha-saubhāgya-yaśas-karāṇi ruk-śoka-hantṛiṇi. iṣita-kāma-dāni*).
 - 7) The place Tāmraparṇī is often referred to in Kāvya literature: *Raghuvamśa* 4.50 (*tāmraparṇī-sametasya muktāsāram mahodadheḥ*), *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā* XVII (GOS 1, p. 92, lines 23-24: *mauktika-kāma-dhenur...tāmraparṇī*), *Karpūramañjarī* 3.3 prose (HOS.1, p. 71, lines 8-9: *tado cittā-nakkhatta-gade bhaavadi mattaṇḍe tambavaṇi-saṃgada-samuddanteṇa gado so mahāmeho...*). Cf. also *Mudrārākṣasa* 3.19.
 - 8) Meyer, *Das altindische Buch vom Welt-und Staatsleben* (Graz, reprint 1977), pp. 107 and 697.
 - 9) Gode, pp. 130-133.
 - 10) Renou, p. 372. Cf. Gaeffke, pp. 587-591. This tradition of *ratna-parīkṣā* seems to have been inherited in Purāṇic texts and commentarial literature. For example, *dvīpendra-jīmūta-varāha-śāṅkha-matsyāhi-śukty-udbhava-veṇujāni muktāphalāni prathitāni loke teṣāṃ ca śukty-udbhavam eva bhūri* (GP. 69.1)
With a slight variation the same verse is quoted by Mallinātha ad *Kumārasambhava* 1.6 (*karindra...*) and *Śisupālavadha* 5.30 (*gajendra...*), and he quotes another verse in his commentary on *Kirātārjunīya* 12.40 which reads:
jīmūta-kari-matsyāhi-vaṃśa-śāṅkha-varāhajāḥ śukty-udbhavās ca vijñeyā aṣṭau mauktika-yonayaḥ
 - 11) Occasionally the *makara*'s jaws are also mentioned.
prasahya maṇim uddharen makara-vaktra-damṣṭrāntarāt samudram api prataret pracalad-ūrmimālākulam bhujāṅgam api kopitaṃ śirasi puspavad dhārayen na tu pratiniṣṭha-mūrkhajana-cittam ārādhayet
(*Nīṭisataka* 4=IS. 4283)
Coomaraswami 1993, p. 144 (to extract a pearl from a *makara*'s jaws was a proverbial example of courage.)
The *jala-hastin* (water-elephant, or crocodile?) is also believed to possess a pearl in its frontal lobe:
jalahastinām udagra-kumbha-muktāphala-dāma-danturāṇi ca danta-kāṇḍa-kuṇḍalāni (*Harṣacarita*, p. 218, lines 2-3).
 - 12) *airāvata-kulajānām puṣya-śraṇaṇendu-sūrya-divaseṣu ye cottarāyaṇabhavā grahaṇe 'rkendvoś ca bhadrēbhāḥ* (20) *teṣāṃ kila jāyante muktāḥ kumbheṣu saradakoṣeṣu bahavo brhat-pramānā bahusamsthānāḥ prabhā-yuktāḥ* (21) *naiṣāṃ arghah kāryo na ca vedho 'tīva te prabhā-yuktāḥ suta-vijayārogyakarā mahāpavitṛā dhṛtā rājñām* (BS. 80. 22)
According to GP. 69. 5, they are said to be yellowish in colour (*āpita-varṇa*) and without gloss (*prabhayā vihina*).
 - 13) *śāṅkhodbhavam śaśinibhaṃ vṛttam bhrājiṣṇu ruciraṃ ca* (BS. 80. 28)
 - 14) *svayoni-madhya-cchavi-tulya-varṇaṃ śāṅkhaṃ brhat-koṇaṃ pala-pramāṇam* (GP. 69. 5)
 - 15) *kambūdbhavam teṣo adhamam pradīṣṭam utpadyate yac ca gajendra-kumbhāt* (GP. 69. 4)
 - 16) *timijam matsyākṣi-nibhaṃ brhat pavitraṃ bahugunam ca* (BS. 80. 23)
 - 17) *pāṭhina-prīṣṭhasya samāna-varṇaṃ mināt svṛttam laghu cātisūksmam* (GP. 69. 7)
 - 18) *damṣṭrāmūle śaśikānti-saprabhaṃ bahugunam ca vārūham* (BS. 81. 23)

- varāha-damṣṭrā-prabhavam pradīṣṭam tasyaiva damṣṭrānkura-tulya-varṇam
kvacit kathamcīt sa bhuvah pradēse prajāyate sūkaravad aviśiṣṭah* (GP. 69. 8)
- 19) *karpūra-sphaṭika-nibhaṃ cipiṭam viṣamam ca veṇujam jñeyam* (BS. 80. 28)
- 20) *te veṇavo bhavya-janopabhogye sthāne prarohanti na sārva-janye* (GP. 69. 9)
- 21) *kāla-krameṇa parināma-vaśād anarghyā bhāvā bhavanti khalu pūrvam ativa tucchāḥ
muktā-maṇir jalada-toya-kaṇo 'py aniyān sampadyate ca cira-kicaka-randhra-madhye* (IS. 1689)
- 22) *dhanyaḥ sa bhū-bhr̥d yasya vaṃṣe maṇir iva muktāmayaḥ saṃbhūto 'si* (*Harṣacarita*, p. 239, lines 27-8)
*asau nāsā-vaṃśas...tvadiyo...phalatu phalam asmākam ucitam vahann antar muktāḥ...muktā-maṇi-
dharah* (*Saundaryaraharī* 61) See W.N. Brown's note (HOS 43, p. 95).
tatra drumā vidruma-nāmadheyā vaṃśeṣu muktāphala-janma tatra (*Kāvya-mīmāṃsā* 17, GOS 1, p. 93,
lines 1-2)
- 23) *varṣopalavaj jātam vāyu-skandhāc ca saptamād bhraṣṭam
hriyate kila khād divyais tadit-prabhaṃ megha-sambhūtam* (BS. 80. 24)
- 24) *takṣaka-vāsuki-kulajāḥ kāmagamā ye ca pannaḡas teṣāṃ smigdhā nila-dyutayo bhavanti muktāḥ
phanasyānte* (BS. 80. 25)
- 25) *śaste 'vani-pradēse rajatamaye bhājane sthite ca yadi
varṣati devo 'kasmāt taj jñeyam nāga-sambhūtam* (BS. 80. 26)
Cf. *uragendra-mūrdha-ruha-ratna-saṃnidher muhur unnatasya rasitaiḥ payomucaḥ
abhavan yad aṅgaṇa-bhuvah samucchvasan-nava-vālavāyaja-maṇi-sthalāṅkurāḥ* (*Śiṣupālavadha* 13. 58)
- 26) *apaharati viṣam alakṣmīm kṣapayati śatrūn yaśo vikāśayati
bhaujaṅgam nṛpatinām dhṛtam akṛtārgham vijayadam ca* (BS. 80. 27)
Cf. Vogel, pp. 25ff. and Gaeffke, p. 588.
- 27) Cf. BS. 80. 29 (*śāstre na nirdiṣṭah*).
- 28) Cf. GP. 69. 1 (*teṣāṃ ca śukty-udbhavam eva bhūri*).
- 29) Cf. BS. 81. 1 (*teṣāṃ bahu sādhu ca saktijam bhavati*).
- 30) Cf. GP. 69. 2 (*vedhyam tu śukty-udbhavam eva teṣāṃ śeṣāny avedhyāni vadanti taj-jñāḥ*).
- 31) Cf. Sarma 1991.
- 32) Cf. Gaeffke 1954 and J.J. Meyer, *Hindu Tales*, p. 277, note 1.
- 33) Rau, p. 193 (5), p. 194 (11) (12), and p. 196 (23).
- 34) However, the commentarial literature on Kāvya, as exemplified by Mallinātha, inherits the śāstric tradition. Furthermore, the snake-jewel in Kāvya is reddish, whereas the śāstric one is blue. The magic powers which are attributed to the snake-jewel by the *ratnaparikṣā* texts are not at all mentioned by the poets (Gaeffke, p. 590).
- 35) Beside these two traditions, there also seems to exist an independent source, that is, the Pali Jātaka tradition (Gaeffke, p. 591).
- 36) Cf. Gaeffke, p. 588 and p. 590.
- 37) Cf. *Nāgānanda* 5.36. Cf. Vogel, p. 171 with P. Boyd's translation.
- 38) For the story about the two tongues of a snake, cf. Vogel, pp. 53-55.
- 39) With regard to the "poison," see:
*tad anu viṣamam viṣam ulbanam vamanṭaḥ phaṇālamkaraṇā ratna-rāji-nirājita-rāja-mandirābhogā
bhogino bhayam janayanto nisceruḥ* (*Daśakumāracarita*, p. 56, lines 9-10)
- 40) With regard to the "hissing vapour," see:
*niḥśvāsa-dhūmaṃ saha ratna-bhābhīr bhittvotthitam bhūmim ivoragāṇām
nīlopala-syūta-vicitra-dhātum asāu giriṃ raivatakam dadarśa* (*Śiṣupālavadha* 4. 1)
(*niḥśvāsa-dhūma=phūtākāra-bāṣpa*: Mallinātha)
- 41) Allusions to snakes coming out to cool themselves are frequently encountered in Sanskrit literature; cf. *Buddhacarita* 1.44, *Kādambari*, p. 237, line 5.
- 42) It is compared to a flower (*puṣpa*) because of its "colourfulness." Thus, a person caught in the embrace of a snake resembles a tree entwined with creepers, and the gem on the snake's head is compared to the creeper's flowers:
*pariveṣṭita-mūrtayaś ca mūlād uragair ā śirasah saratna-puṣpaiḥ
dadhur āyata-valli-veṣṭitānām upamānam manujā mahiruhāṇām* (*Śiṣupālavadha* 20. 49)

“The human figures engirt from head to foot by gemmed snakes bore a resemblance to trees enveloped by slender flowering creepers.”

- 43) Cf. *Dasakumāracarita*, p. 111, line 14 (*yadi kaścid bhujāṅgo asmad-icchayā vinainām bālām vipralabhya nāśayisyati sa taskaravad vadhyah*).
- 44) The jewel (*maṇi*) which Kāliya presented to Suśeṇa almost surpassed (*hrāpayatīva*) the lustre of Kaustubha which Kṛṣṇa wore on his chest (*Raghuvamśa* 6.49; cf. Gaeffke, p. 584).
- 45) Cf. *Kādambarī* p. 59, line 4 (*bhujaga-phāṇa-maner āpāṭalair amśubhir...*).
- 46) Gaeffke quotes a passage from Vākpati’s *Gauḍavaḥo* V. 348 which says that even when a snake is devoured by a peacock, the gem makes the feathers of the peacock lustrous (Gaeffke, p. 585).
- 47) Cf. Gaeffke, p. 581. However, the *maṇi* detached (*cyuta*) from a snake is indicative of an inauspicious omen (Gaeffke, p. 586).
lakṣyate sma tad-anantaram ravir baddha-bhima-pariveṣa-maṇḍalah
vainateya-sāmitasya bhogino bhoga-veṣṭita iva cyuto maṇiḥ (*Raghuvamśa* 11. 59)
- 48) For the contrast between *ahi-doṣa* and *maṇi-guṇa*, cf. IS.773. Cf. also IS. 6221 and 7022.
- 49) Cf. *kaḥ karaṁ prasārayet pannaga-ratna-sūcaye* (*Kumārasambhava* 5.43d: “Who would stretch his hand to the tip of the serpent’s jewel?”)
ko gṛhṇāti phaṇa-maṇim jvalantam atitejasā bhujamgasya yo dr̥ṣṭyaiva praharati durāsadam kopayati kas tam (PPT. 1. 316: “Who takes the hood-gem of a snake, though shining bright? Who irritates the formidable man who attacks only by gaze?”)
- 50) Cf. Gaeffke, pp. 585-586. One may compare this to the Chinese proverb about entering a tiger’s den to get the tiger’s cub.
- 51) For the *śakti-traya* in general, cf. Hara 1981. p. 20, Note 8.
- 52) The female snake (*nāgī*) is also furnished with a jewel. In the description of Madirāvātī we read,
nāgiva visphurad-ratna-mūrdhā dhavala-kañcukā abhi-viciva lāvanya-pūrnā muktāvalicitā (KSS. 104. 165)
“Like a female snake, her head was adorned with a flashing jewel, and she had a white robe (=slough). Like a wave of the sea, she was full of beauty (=saltiness) and covered with strings of pearls.”
- 53) Cf. Sarma, pp. 196-7.
- 54) Cf. Sarma. p. 199.
- 55) GP. 69. 4-5.
- 56) It should be noted, however, that even if the pearls from an elephant’s forehead have been dislodged by a flesh-loving lion and lie abandoned by the wayside, they do not diminish in value:
tvayi bhaktimatā na satkṛtaḥ kururājā gurur eva cedipah
priyamāmsamrgādhipojjhitah kim avadyah karikumbhajo maṇiḥ (*Śiśupālavadha* 16. 45)
- 57) For the image of elephants cooling themselves with water, cf:
vichinna-muktāhārābhāiḥ kvacid dvirada-śikaraiḥ
upalāsphālanotkirnam ūrmi-cūrnam ivodvahat (*Jātakamālā* 22. 14)
- 58) For the poetical convention (*kavi-samaya*) of the whiteness of glory or fame (*yaśas, kīrti*), cf. Hara 1995, p. 141.
- 59) Cf. *simhaḥ śiṣur api nīpatati madamalinakapolabhittiṣu gajeṣu*
prakṛtir iyaṁ sattvavatām na khalu vayas tejaso hetuḥ (*IS.* 7040)
“A lion, even young, attacks elephants whose cheeks are stained with ichor. This is the nature of the courageous, and age is not the cause of valour.”
- 60) Hara 1996, p. 249, note 42.
- 61) Cf. *vanakari-kumbha-vidalita-rakta-muktāphalāni rudhirāruṇāni balisiktha-lubdha-mugdha-kṛkavāku-grasta-muktāni vikaradbbhir ambikā-parigryaha-durlalitaiḥ kṛṣṇadbbhir kesari-kīśorakair asūnyoddeśām* ...(*Kādambarī*, p. 395, lines 10ff.)
- 62) Cf. also *Saundaryalahari* 74 (red and white).

- 63) Cf. note 56 above (*Śiṣupālavadha* 16. 45).
- 64) Cf. IS. 7038 quoted above.
- 65) *oṣāṃ āse matsarotpāta-vātāśliṣyad-danta-kṣmāruhām gharṣaṇotthaiḥ*
yaugāntair vā vahnibhir vāraṇānām uccair mūrdha-vyomni nakṣatra-mālā (*Śiṣupālavadha* 18. 35)
 “The string of gems on elephants’ foreheads blazes like the stars illuminated up in the heavens by the fires at the end of an aeon, which arise when tusklike trees rub together because of hostile winds.”
 In the description of the two beautiful Daitya maidens (*daitya-kanyaka*) in the Pātāla region, we read:
bibhrāṇe jaghanābhogaṃ vipulaṃ baddha-mekhalam
nakṣatra-mālāṅkam iva smara-dvīpa-sīrah-sthalam (KSS. 118. 164)
 “These two maidens with broad hips fastened with a girdle which they wore looked like the head of the elephant of love adorned with a girdle of constellations.”
- 66) “Quarter” or “direction” (*diś*) was often personified in ways that gave free rein to the poet’s imagination: *Śiṣupālavadha* 5. 3, 9. 7, 9. 10, 11. 12, 11. 16, 11. 22, 11. 44, 11. 65, 17. 61, 20. 14; *Kirātārjunīya* 4. 24, 9. 17-18; KSS. 84. 42; *Vāsavadattā* 253-254, 285.
- 67) In Sanskrit literature waves are often described as the ocean’s hands: e.g., *Raghuvamśa* 4. 52, *Śiṣupālavadha* 3. 39-40, 3. 78, 9. 38, 14. 73; *Kirātārjunīya* 18. 5; *Jātakamālā* 22. 11.
- 68) It is said, however, that Garuḍa removes the jewels of snakes without any difficulty. Cf. Gaeffke, p. 586.
- 69) For the two sources of the elephants pearls (*kumbha* and *sarada-kośa*), cf. Sarma, pp. 199ff.
- 70) Rau, p. 194 (15).
- 71) For this story, see Kantawala 1980-1, pp. 221-2, and Bonazzoli, p. 328, note 24.
- 72) For *svaḥstha-asvasta*, cf. Hara 1995a, pp. 84-86.
- 73) Not only the moon’s tears, but also tears shed by beautiful women are compared to pearls.
Meghadūta 102d : *muktā-sthūlās...āśru-leśāḥ patanti*
Raghuvamśa 6.28ab: *āśru-bindūn muktāphala-sthūlatamān*
 KSS. 55. 124 : *muktāphala-nibhaiḥ patadbhir bāṣpa-bindubhiḥ*
 KSS. 101. 149 : *prarurodāśrubhiḥ chinna-hāra-muktāphalopamaiḥ*
 KSS. 117. 35 : *chinna-hāra-galat-sthūla-muktābhair āśru-bindubhiḥ*
Kādambarī, p. 572. 13: *prakīrṇa-tāra-muktānukāri-nayana-bindu...*
- 74) For the image of raindrops falling from the clouds being absorbed by sea-oysters, cf. *Karṇapurāṇa* 3.3 prose (HOS. 1, p. 72, lines 1-3).
- 75) Pearls are thus linked to tears, and they were conceived of as being originally composed of “water.”
karoti nirmalādhāras tucchasyāpi mahārghatām
ambuno bindur alpo ’pi śuktau muktāphalam bhavet (IS. 1544)
 “A stainless receptacle makes even a worthless thing into something of great value. A raindrop, even small, becomes a pearl in an oyster.”
pātra-viśeṣe nyastam guṇāntaram vrajati śilpam ādhātuḥ
jalam iva samudra-śuktau muktāphalatām payodasya (IS. 4029)
 “A teacher’s art reaches a higher level when entrusted to a good pupil, as a waterdrop from a cloud is transformed into a pearl when received by a sea-oyster.”
saṃtaptāyasi saṃsthitasya payaso nāmāpi na jñāyate
muktākāratayā tad eva nalini-patre sthitam rājate
svātāyām sāgara-śukti-madhya-patitam tam mauktikam jāyate
prāyēnādhama-madhyamottama-guṇaḥ samsargato jāyate (IS. 6781=Nītiśataka 57)
 “If a waterdrop falls upon hot iron, even its name is never known; if it stays on a lotus-leaf, it looks like a pearl; if dropped in a sea-oyster in the constellation of Svāsti, it becomes a pearl. Mostly, the quality—low, middle and high—is produced from contact.” Cf. also IS. 344 and 1689 quoted above.
 Pearls are likewise compared to tears, and a woman’s bed in the morning is likened to a

sandy beach scattered with pearls.

pratibodha-jymbhaṇa-vibhinna-mukhī puline saroruhadr̥ṣā dadr̥ṣe

patad-accha-mauktika-maṇi-prakarā galad-aśru-bindur iva śukti-vadhūḥ (*Kirātārjunīya* 6. 12)

As regards the image of a waterdrop resembling a pearl, cf.:

mahājanasya saṃparkaḥ kasya nonnati-kārakaḥ

padma-pattra-sthitaṃ vāri dhatte muktāphala-sriyam (PPT. 3. 51)

- 76) A woman's tender heart will harden when in love, and this is likened to the way in which water solidifies to become pearls.

manye ca mṛdu-svabhāvam api jalam iva muktāphalatām upagataṃ kaṭhini-bhavaty utkaṇṭhitam
hrdayam abalājanasya tat tādṛśenātisaṃtāpenāpi na viliyate (*Kādambari*, p. 441, lines 5-6)

The idea of *kaṭhini-bhavati* supports Lüder's proposition.

- 77) Ruegg, pp. 5-6.

- 78) Another, yet very unfortunate transformation of tears is related in the Mahābhārata when explaining the origin of various diseases.

yān aśru-bindūn patiitān apaśyam ye pāṇibhyāṃ dhāritās te purastāt

te vyādhayo mānavān ghora-rūpāḥ prāpte kāle pīdayisyanti mṛtyo (MBh. 12. 250. 33)

- 79) Since *muktā*-s means both "pearls" and "those who are emancipated," poets often amuse themselves with double entendre.

muktānām satatādhivāsa-ruciram vakṣoja-kumbha-dvayam (IS. 1916c)

hāro 'yam harināksīṣṇām luṭhati stana-maṇḍale muktānām apy avastheyam ke vayam smara-kiṃkarāḥ
(IS. 7386)

itara-bhajana-ghana-rasataḥ phala-nispattir na vā bhaved iti na

muktāḥ paraṃ tu loka svāti-ghana-rasaṃ vinā na jāyeraṇ (*Mahāsubhāṣitasamgraha* 5782; cf. C. J. Kashikar, ABORI 60, p. 301)

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Abbreviations and Texts

- ABORI.* : *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* (Poona)
- BS.* : *Bṛhatsamhitā*, Sarasvatī Bhavan Granthamālā 97 (Varanasi 1968)
- GOS.* : *Gaekwad's Oriental Series* (Baroda)
- GP.* : *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (Sarasvatī Press, Calcutta 1890)
- HOS.* : *Harvard Oriental Series* (Cambridge, Mass.)
- IS.* : *Indische Sprüche* von O. Böhtlingk (Osnabrück Reprint 1966).
- IT.* : *Indologica Taurinensia* (Torino).
- J.* : *Jātaka* ed., by V. Fausbøll (Pali Text Society, London).
- KSS.* : *Kathāsaritsāgara of Somadeva Bhaṭṭa* (NSP. 1930)
- MBh.* : *Mahābhārata* (Poona Critical Edition)
- MS.* : *Manusmṛti* (NSP. 1946)
- NSP.* : *Nirṇaya Sagar Press* (Bombay)
- PPT.* : *Pūrṇabhadrā's Pañcatantra* ed., by J. Hertel (HOS. 11, 1908)
- TSS.* : *Trivandrum Sanskrit Series* (Trivandrum)
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