

#CRAFTMANSHIP

Master Jewelry

Ancient Elegance: A Nile Catfish Pendant from Egypt's Middle Kingdom



Delicate, dazzling, and deeply symbolic, this Nile catfish pendant, crafted over 3,800 years ago, is a striking example of ancient Egyptian artistry and belief. Dating back to the 12th Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom (circa 1991-1802 BCE), this miniature masterpiece reflects both the technical sophistication and the symbolic richness of Egyptian jewelry.

Shaped in the form of a Synodontis batensoda, a species of African catfish native to the Nile, the pendant measures a modest 1.75 x 3.97 x 1 cm (11/16 x 19/16 x 3/8 inches), yet contains an impressive array of materials and meaning. It was fashioned from solid gold and adorned with intricate inlays of Egyptian green glazed faience, chalcodony, turquoise, carnelian, lapis lazuli, and black stone. Its eyes are especially striking, one rendered in red stone, the other in green, possibly symbolizing balance, duality, or divine protection.

The catfish motif itself is rich with significance. Fish appear frequently in Egyptian iconography and daily life scenes, often associated with fertility, rebirth, and the Nile's life-giving abundance. In particular, the Synodontis

catfish, known for swimming upside-down, may have intrigued ancient Egyptians with its unusual behaviour, making it a symbol of the mysterious and the sacred.

Jewelry in ancient Egypt was never merely decorative. Pieces like this pendant were believed to hold protective powers, serving as amulets to safeguard the wearer in both life and the afterlife. The choice of materials, each with symbolic resonance, further underscored the pendant's spiritual function. For instance, lapis lazuli was associated with the heavens, carnelian with vitality, and turquoise with joy and regeneration.

Today, this exquisite artifact is housed at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, where it continues to captivate visitors with its timeless beauty and the mystery of its meaning. It was acquired by Henry Walters, an American collector and philanthropist, and formally entered the museum's collection by bequest in 1931.

As small as it may be, this pendant connects us to the ancient world with remarkable intimacy. It offers a glimpse into the lives, beliefs, and artistic achievements of a civilization that continues to inspire awe and admiration millennia later.

Me - An Indian Armed Forces' Daughter And Wife

There was instant recognition. The same stories, the same humour, the same shorthand references that require no explanation. Watching this exchange, my father reached his own conclusion. When my future husband asked for Old Monk rum, neat, my father, by his own admission, decided that this would indeed be his son-in-law. It was a small moment, delivered with understatement, but it revealed something larger: the gravitational pull of shared institutions. Ex-NDA's, it turns out, recognise their own.



Divya Saxena Prakash

India's Armed Forces are often discussed in the language of sacrifice and strategy. Less visible is the quiet social universe they create, one that shapes families, identities and relationships long before uniforms are donned or ranks earned. I belong to that universe, formed not by commission but by legacy.

I grew up in small Army cantonments, contained worlds where childhood unfolded within invisible yet reassuring boundaries. Security was assumed, community came built-in and change was constant. Homes were packed into steel trunks, friendships assembled quickly and farewells managed with composure. At the time, it felt unexceptional. In hindsight, it was an

education in adaptability. Service, in our household, was never framed as heroism. It was simply routine. My father left for work in uniform, postings were expected and permanence was regarded with suspicion. Stability came not from addresses, but from values.

Years later, living in naval bases as a spouse, I recognise the same underlying rhythm. The setting has shifted from cantonments to coastlines, but the emotional grammar remains unchanged. Bases function as self-contained communities, shaped by trust, shared norms and the unspoken understanding that individual lives intersect constantly with institutional demands.

Three Services, One Familiar Language

My life has been shaped by all three Services, we are what the military calls a 'Purple Family', purple being the colour of tri-service unity. My father served in the Army, my father-in-law in the Air Force, and my husband is in the Navy, each an alumnus of the National Defence Academy. Long before the NDA entered my own lived experience, it occupied a permanent place in fam-

ily conversation. Stories of squadron rivalries, relentless drills and friendships forged under pressure formed a shared vocabulary. That vocabulary proved unexpectedly useful when my husband and I first met.

Unlike many inter-regional marriages in uniformed families, ours did not begin with romance but with logistics. We were introduced through the matrimonial section of a leading national daily, under parental supervision. The meeting itself was unremarkable, until conversation moved swiftly past pleasantries and settled, almost inevitably, on NDA.

From Protected to Participating

There is a subtle shift when one moves from being a child within uniformed spaces to an adult spouse in them. As a child, the system protects you. As a spouse, you participate in sustaining it.

Naval life, like Army life, extends beyond the professional. Spouses become steady presences during long deployments, informal counsellors within close-knit communities and active participants in welfare initiatives. These roles are rarely articulated, but deeply embedded in everyday functioning.

Contrary to popular perception, such environments do not flatten individuality; they sharpen it. Frequent movement cultivates adaptability. Close living fosters empathy. Proximity to service encourages perspective. You learn quickly that rank is situational, postings are temporary and what endures is character.

Certain places leave deeper imprints. Suratgarh, a lush green oasis along the Indira Gandhi Canal in Rajasthan, is one of them. In the 1990s, I spent three formative years there while my father was posted as a Major. Remote by civilian stan-

dards, Suratgarh was, and remains, a strategically vital cantonment. But for us kids, it was a universe of dusty lawns, regimented routines and effortless friendships. Years later, I returned as the daughter of the Station Commander to take the seven pheras with my groom on the lawns of the Flag Staff House. I may not have visited Suratgarh again, but our ties to it as a couple are deep. Some places do not demand repeat visits; they mark you permanently.

A Circle Completed

My journey from Army daughter to naval wife does not feel like a departure; it feels like continuity. The cantonments of my childhood and the naval bases of my present are variations on a shared design, different landscapes animated by the same values of service, discipline and collective responsibility.

By sheer coincidence, or perhaps quiet design, I was born at Indian Naval Hospital Ship Kalvani in Visakhapatnam, despite being the daughter of an Army officer from North India. For years, it was little more than a name on my birth certificate. My father's sister hap-



#SERVICES

community without sentimentality. They also foster respect for institutions at a time when institutional faith is often in short supply. Perhaps most importantly, they recalibrate one's relationship with certainty. When homes change and routines reset, permanence loosens its grip. Belonging becomes portable. Home becomes something you construct repeatedly, without resentment.

The Quiet Education of Uniformed Life

The Armed Forces educate not only those who serve, but those who grow alongside them. They teach resilience without spectacle and

grace without sentimentality. They also foster respect for institutions at a time when institutional faith is often in short supply.

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This is not romanticism. It is recognition.

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By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

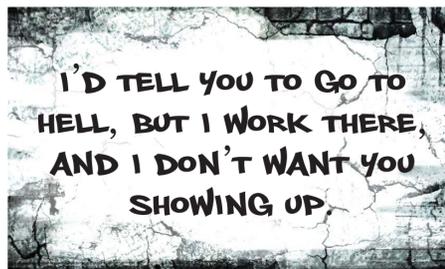
ZITS



JCOs invite Officers on 15 August?



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



#HERITAGE

Kahu-Jo-Darro

At the heart of Kahu-Jo-Darro stood a massive Buddhist stupa, believed to have been both a spiritual sanctuary and an educational center

When the history of ancient Sindh is discussed, Mohenjo-Daro often takes center stage. Yet, quietly resting near Mirpur Khas lies another extraordinary site, Kahu-Jo-Darro, a place that reveals a lesser-known but deeply significant chapter of the region's past. Dating back to the 5th Century CE, this archaeological mound stands as powerful evidence of Sindh's rich Buddhist heritage and its role in the cultural and spiritual networks of South Asia.

Unlike the urban sophistication of the Indus Valley Civilization, Kahu-Jo-Darro belongs to a later historical phase, when Buddhism flourished across the region during the Gupta period. The site offers historians and archaeologists a rare opportunity to understand how faith, art, and education intersected in ancient Sindh.

The Great Stupa: A Center of Faith and Learning

At the heart of Kahu-Jo-Darro stood a massive Buddhist stupa, believed to have been both a spiritual sanctuary and an educational center. Monks, pilgrims, and scholars likely gathered here to study Buddhist philosophy, meditate, and participate in religious rituals. The scale of the stupa suggests that the site was not a minor settlement, but an important hub within the broader Buddhist world. The stupa symbolized more than devotion; it reflected

Archaeological Discoveries of Great Value

Excavations at Kahu-Jo-Darro have yielded extraordinary finds. Among the most significant discoveries is a crystal relic casket, believed to have once held sacred Buddhist relics. In addition, hundreds of offering tablets were unearthed, inscribed with prayers or symbols of faith.

These invaluable artifacts are now preserved at the National Museum of Pakistan, where they continue to provide insight into the spiritual life, artistic traditions, and devo-



the prosperity and patronage that Buddhism enjoyed in the region at the time.

Artistic Excellence in Terracotta

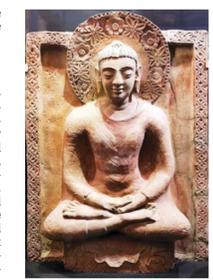
One of Kahu-Jo-Darro's greatest contributions to world heritage is its remarkable terracotta plaques. These plaques, now celebrated globally, depict Lord Buddha in various mudras, scenes from Buddhist teachings, and symbolic motifs. Their precision, emotional depth, and stylistic balance demonstrate an advanced level of artistic sophistication. What makes these artifacts particularly special is their local character. While influenced by classical Gupta art, the plaques carry distinct Sindh elements, revealing how global religious ideas were adapted through regional aesthetics.

Preserving a Fragile Legacy

Today, time and environmental factors have taken a visible toll on Kahu-Jo-Darro. Erosion, neglect, and lack of public awareness threaten its preservation. Yet, even in its weathered state, the site continues to inspire historians, archaeologists, and travelers who seek to understand the layered history of this land.

Kahu-Jo-Darro is more than an archaeological mound; it is a reminder that Sindh's past is diverse, pluralistic, and deeply interconnected. Preserving such sites is not merely about protecting stones and artifacts, but about safeguarding the stories, beliefs, and identities that have shaped generations.

As attention grows towards heritage conservation, Kahu-Jo-Darro deserves recognition as one of Sindh's most important cultural treasures, quiet, enduring, and profoundly meaningful.



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By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman