

History of Indian Jewellery

History of Indian jewellery is as old as the history of the country itself. Around 5000 years ago, the desire to adorn themselves aroused in people, leading to the origin of jewellery. Since then, Indian women and jewellery have gone hand in hand. There cannot be a woman in India, who does not adore herself with minimum jewellery. In fact, jewellery is considered as security and prestige of women in the country. The attraction for jewellery has been great in India that it is no more a craft than an art.

Indian jewellery is unique in its design and workmanship. In all kinds of traditional dance forms, jewellery has been a significant part. Be it Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi or Kathak, all have given importance to jewellery in presenting the artist. The sheer number of items forming the jewellery of an Indian woman is numerous, ranging from earrings and necklaces to pieces for adorning the hair, hip, feet, and feet. Jewellery made with emeralds, diamonds, pearls, rubies, sapphires and other precious and semi-precious stones have been in practice for long.

The range of jewellery in India varies from religious to purely aesthetic types. It is crafted not only for humans, but also for the Gods, ceremonial elephants and horses. Royal class people have given patronage to the art of jewellery since ancient times, when rajas and maharajas vied with each other to possess the most exquisite and magnificent pieces. Regional differences can be observed in the making of jewellery, depending on the differences in geography, people, culture, and their lifestyle.

While the designs in solid gold jewellery of Tamil Nadu and Kerala are inspired by nature, the Meenakari and Kundan styles of jewellery making have been influenced by the Mughal dynasty. Then there is a huge range of silver beads found all over India, especially in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. Their availability leads to the development of the bead jewellery, popular till date.

While Assamese jewellery is influenced by local flora and fauna, Manipuri jewellery-makers make use of items like shells, animal claws, teeth and precious and semi-precious stones. These huge varieties of ornaments bear testimony to the excellent skill of the jewellers and craftspeople of the country. Indian jewellery in Gold, diamonds, silver, sterling silver, precious stones, copper and semi-precious stones is a rage all over the world.

Significance of Indian Jewellery

Indians have been using jewellery for adornment since centuries. The significance of jewellery in the country is evident from the fact that on many auspicious occasions, jewellery forms a part of gifts. Though the trend of men adorning themselves has now faded away, many of them still use earrings, bracelets, pendants, etc. However, it is the Indian women for whom jewellery holds utmost significance. In India, jewellery is considered auspicious for women. Even poorest of poor women will have some kind of jewellery with them.

Jewellery has not only been considered for the purpose of adoration, but also as a security in times of contingency. This is because it is often expensive and can be sold whenever there is dire need of money. This way, jewellery also serves the purpose of insurance, which can be depended upon. Jewellery forms the important part of adoration among Indian women. To accentuate their feminine beauty, they use jewellery made of gold, silver, copper and diamonds. Traditionally, jewellery has always been linked with wealth, power and status.

Talking about the significance of jewellery in the life of women in India, they are gifted jewellery in different phases of life such as, at birth, at coming of age, in marriage, on becoming a mother, etc. Certain ornaments, such as mangalsutra, nath (nose ring) and toe rings, quintessential for married Indian women. From the practice of generations, these gifts are still continuing without any abruption. Jewellery gifted to women at the time of her marriage is called 'stridhan' i.e. wealth of women, which in short is symbol of wealth, power and femininity.

Jewellery design is so versatile in India that it varies from state to state. If some jewellery is so much popular in one state, it might not necessarily be popular in another state. However, some basic jewellery is common among all the women across India. Bridal jewellery like maangtika, earrings, nose rings, necklace, mangalsutra, bangles,

etc make up basic jewellery which adorn women in India. Incidentally, even today, gold is the metal most widely used for bridal ornaments and over the last decade, these are increasingly being studded with diamonds.

Indian Jewellery

India and jewellery, jewellery and Indian women - the terms are linked inherently. At the time of wedding as well as numerous other occasions, a woman is gifted jewellery by her parents and relatives. Although the gift is meant to give her security in contingency, ornamentation is an obvious purpose. All the cities across the length and width of India have shops of jewellers - some traditional and some modern jewellers, catering to the need of all kinds. Not that the affluent class people wear ornaments, there are low cost jewellery items in ample, which cater the demand of low income group as well.



India houses various kinds of jewellery arts, ranging from Meenakari and Kundan to stone and bead work. The craft of cutting and polishing precious and semi-precious stones and giving them glamorous face is something artistic. Emeralds, rubies, garnets, amethysts, corals, sapphires, and turquoises are among the stones which are used for the enhancement of gold and silver jewellery. Gold jewellery is the most popular among South Indian women. In southern part of India, gold is considered auspicious and a status symbol. Talking about the art on gold jewellery, Kundan is something that comes into our mind.

It is a Mughal-inspired art of setting precious stones like diamonds, rubies, and emeralds in gold and silver jewellery. In Meenakari, enameling is done to protect gold and floral pattern coloured in red, blue and green attracts the attention. Silver jewellery is not far behind in popularity, particularly because of its affordability, making it popular among low income group people. Jhumka, hansli, chokar, nath and bracelets made of silver are quite popular among women in India. In short, the range of jewellery in India is wide as well as varied. Be it gold, silver or diamond, you will find everything in the country.

Types of Indian Jewellery

Tradition of adoring oneself with jewellery is 5000 years old in India. Indian women and jewellery have always formed a great combination. The tradition is still alive and time has made it only more vigorous than earlier. The art of making beautiful ornaments, with delicacy and acumen, has been developed throughout the historical times. Rulers and feudal gave patronage to art and artists, to develop the same to optimum. There is jewellery for almost all the body parts, including neck, ear, nose, arms, ankles, fingers, waist, hair parting, etc.



In India, jewellery is designed to match with the attire. The theme of its design as well as the colour of the jewellery is taken into consideration while adoring. To make jewellery more attractive, it is topped by diamonds and various types of gems. Traditionally, Indian jewellery has been made of heavy and voluminous gold pieces, but recently jewellery made of silver, platinum and other metals has become quite popular among people. The popularity of jewellery made of stone, encrusted on metal, has grown more recently. In the following lines, we will tell you about the different kinds of jewellery in India.

Bridal Jewellery

An Indian bride is deemed incomplete without her sixteen adornments and jewellery forms an essential part of these adornments. On the main wedding day, every bride is expected to look her best. To achieve this goal, the bride pays special attention towards her wedding attire, jewellery, accessories, makeup and hair style. There are a number of items in the jewellery which cover, almost all the vital parts of the body. These items are specially prepared to compliment the bridal dress. The bridal jewellery consists of the following items.



Maangtika

It is worn on the forehead by the bride. This is a reason why most of the bridal hair styles bear centre parting. This is done in order to accommodate the maangtika. This can be in different shapes and studded with different precious and semi precious stones. It usually consists of a string with a centre piece attached to one end. In varied cultures, the form of the maangtika varies. It is even seen as a crown in some regions.

Necklace

Necklace is the most eye catchy piece of jewellery, worn by the bride. It comes along with matching ear rings and nose piece. Moreover, attention is paid that it complements the colour of your attire and neck line. A choker is deemed perfect for such an occasion, coupled with a long necklace.

Ear Rings

The ear rings usually match the necklace. You can choose between varieties like long heavy ear rings or short loops, from antique ear rings to small studs, depending upon your wedding outfit's colour and design.

Nose Ring

This is another essential jewellery item to be worn by the bride. It is also chosen keeping in mind the colour and design of the ear rings. The traditional nose piece is known as 'Nath', which consists of a studded nose ring with a long chain hooked up in the hair. In case the nose is not pierced, there are nose studs available, which can be temporarily worn by the bride for the ceremony.

Bangles

Bangles are the symbol of the nuptial rituals. As a result, the bride wears both gold as well as glass bangles on her wedding day. The glass bangles are mostly of the colour of the wedding dress. However, the gold bangles are the ones gifted by the mother in law.

Arm Bands

Arm bands or armlets enhance the beauty of the bride, elating her grace and elegance. It is a traditional and regal jewellery item, which has become quite a fashion statement today. For a more stylish look, they are worn only on one arm.

Rings

Rings are also vital to the embellishment of the bride. Usually the bride wears a Hath phoolhar in her hands. This consists of five rings for all the fingers, connected with a central piece, further connected with a bracelet, to be worn in the hand.

Waist Band

Waist band is worn on the waist, over the saree or the lehenga. This is a heavy jewellery piece, which is quite traditional in look and design. This also serves as a support for the wedding dress and helps to keep in place. An artistic waist band can really add up to the grandeur of your wedding ensemble.

Anklets and Toe Rings

The bride also wears anklets and toe rings in her feet. These are usually made of silver as gold is not worn in the feet. They are available in intricate designs, decorated with works of meenakari, kundan and beads.

Antique Jewellery

The jewellery which is not in mainstream production and of which the mode of production is no longer popular is known by the name of 'Antique Jewellery.' This kind of jewellery has dull and rough look, combined with an old world-world charm, and this serves as the major USP of such jewellery. It takes you back to yore era, by its unfinished and dull looks. The jewellery pieces in antique jewellery usually belong to a particular period of history, when its popularity was at its peak.



In India, you can find antique jewellery in numerous forms, like meenakari, kundan work, and so on. Those pieces of antique jewellery that are extremely rare are usually sold at auctions, in antique stores and curio shops. They include the jewellery that belongs to the early period of history. It is this rarity of antique jewellery that makes it so appealing. However, at times, jewellery that is furnished in antique pattern is also given the name of antique jewellery.

Still, those who really value the rarity and exclusivity of antique jewellery, go for the original pieces. Antique jewellery embodies the unadulterated jewellery tradition of the country, in the earlier times, concentrating on ethnic motifs and stones, metal and design. The antique jewellery of India is popular not only within its own territorial boundaries, but also finds favour amongst people belonging to UK, USA and other western countries

Bead Jewellery

Bead art in India is five thousand year old and dates back to the time of Indus Valley Civilization. People of that civilization used to make beads out of gold, silver, copper, clay, ivory and even wood. The excavated carried out there came out with finished and unfinished beads from the site. After looking onto them, one gets amazed at the wonderful sense of bead work and jewellery at that time. India is amongst the largest producers of glass beads and particularly, the beads produced in Banaras are exported in large quantities.



During Mughal era also, bead jewellery was in vogue. Bead necklaces of different size and shapes, made up of precious and semi-precious stones, were quite popular during that time. Later on, when Europeans came to India, the bead work became more transparent and semi-transparent. Europeans looked for better and refined as well as transparent bead work, which enabled the artisans to develop their art up to the optimum. This led to widening of the horizon of bead jewellery making.

The bead making part of making bead jewellery is extremely intricate and time consuming. As regards the procedure for the same, the material out of which beads are to be made is first chiseled to obtain a desired shape and size. Thereafter, a hole is drilled into the material, so that a string passes through it, facilitating the stringing of a number of beads together. This whole process is time consuming and asks for lots of patience. Indian craftsmen have known the making of silver beads since ancient times.

Karnal city is known for hollow beads made out of silver. These days, beads made out sterling silver are gaining popularity. Now is the time for fancy glass beads, coloured glass beads and crafted metal beads too. Today, glass beads have become a part of the jewellery worn by urban women in India. Beads made from semi-precious stones also continue to be popular in the country. Beads come in an assortment of shapes and colours and at times, are carved also. Other than the use in jewellery, they are used for embroidery works too.

Custom Jewellery

Custom jewellery is personalized jewellery, which a customer gets her made on her interest and fancy. This happens particularly in cases where readymade jewellery does not match the taste of person. Custom jewellery gives total freedom to customer about the specifics. She can ask for various personal touches and get everything made as per her ideas. In fact, it gives ample space for personal choice and taste to customer, which is not available in case of readymade jewellery.



Custom made jewellery is quite popular among village people, who get their old jewellery melted for new one, with plethora of personal choice in design and pattern. This gives an opportunity to customer to get his favorite gem studded onto the jewellery and favourite colour embellished. Custom jewellery or custom made jewellery is most looked upon for occasions, such as marriages and the like. Like readymade jewellery, in custom made jewellery too has a number of options, like gold jewellery, silver jewellery, diamond jewellery, kundan jewellery, gemstone jewellery, lacquer jewellery, terracotta jewellery, bead jewellery, pearl jewellery, etc.

In readymade jewellery, the jeweller shows the customer catalogues and gives his or her personal suggestions, to help her choose what she desires. In custom made jewellery the customer and craftsman together decide what design is to be made. Often, the customer knows what he or she desires and takes this idea to the jeweller, in the form of a sketch or picture or sample. The popularity of custom jewellery is increasing because of the fact that in it does the customer get specially crafted jewellery suitable to his needs and taste.

Copper Jewellery

Handcrafted from copper and brass the unique Creative Designs copper product range has been inspired by the sights and sounds of Ancient India. In buying these products, you are contributing to the continuation of one of India's most traditional art forms.



These products are handcrafted by burnishing and heat-treating the metals to get the earthy colours, which make it so unique. We recommend that you polish it with a soft cloth and treat it with care and it will last forever.

Copper was an important part of the Bronze Age. Copper alloyed with Tin makes Bronze. Brass, on the other hand, is Copper, alloyed with Zinc.

American Indians of Michigan & Keweenaw Peninsula were the first to discover some of the richest copper mines in the world and are known for making copper into jewelry and tools.

Copper is thought to be strongly helpful to those suffering from arthritis. A pain-reliever, soother and conductor of healing energies.

Copper has long been associated with the planet Venus. Since Libra, the Balancer, is ruled by Venus, Copper is thought to have a balancing and stabilizing effect wherever it is placed. Since Venus is also the Goddess of Love, Copper is thought to be a powerful love charm.

Western Astrology believes Venus rules Taurus and Libra, therefore Copper is the metal associated with Taurus and Libras.

Fashion Jewellery

Fashion jewellery is also called costume jewellery, mainly for the reason that it is not made of precious metals and stones, rather lighter and cheaper material are used. Fashion jewellery is trend-conscious and keeps on changing as per changing needs. For those who are open to experimentation with new and unusual designs, shapes and colours, costume jewellery offers plethora of choices. Rather than using precious ingredients, like gold, silver, platinum and white gold, fashion jewellery designers use cheap products, like jute, leather, peppier mache, bakelite plastic, wood, bone, stone, oxidized metal, horn, lac, terracotta, etc.



Fashion jewellery is almost like an imitation of real jewellery and has been considered cheaper copy of the latter. It is widely available and is pretty light-weight, which forms one of its USP also. The process of making costume jewellery is such that its look deceives for original and authentic version. In place of precious stones, artificial stones, such as cubic zirconia and rhinestones, are used. Such jewellery is available in several colours and looks very attractive. At the same time, it's readily available and has economical prices.

In India also, the concept of fashion jewellery is very much prevalent, especially amongst the college going teenagers. Since the prices are cheap, they can get a wide variety and also keep up with the changing fashion. Indian fashion jewellery industry is growing in quantum, patronized mainly by the youngsters. Following are the most popular products forming a part of the costume jewellery of India.

- Spiral bangles and rings
- Glass beads, strung on nylon
- Chunky tribal jewellery
- Surgical steel jewellery
- Ornaments with symbols and messages
- Charm jewellery, such as mood rings, charm bracelets and others.
- Tattoo jewellery
- Chandelier earrings
- Sterling silver jewellery, studded with artificial stones
- Abstract jewellery
- Body piercing jewellery

Filigree Jewellery

Filigree work is done on silver and involves lots of precision and technicality, added with great amount of patience and an eye for minute details. Historically, filigree work was quite popular in countries like Egypt, Italy, and Spain. India's history of filigree work goes back to early centuries. Indian filigree work is unique in its genre and aesthetics. It is immensely inspired by Greek filigree work, the same



style and old charm has been kept intact till now, by Indian artisans. Filigree jewellery is mainly popular in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh.

As procedure goes, first pure silver is made into very thin wires, by passing it through a wire drawing machine or by hammering. After this, the two thinnest wires are heated and wound around a rotating wheel machine, known as "Charkha". They are then flattened again, to make it as a single wire. This wire is bent in different ways, to give it many different forms and shapes. Filigree is also used for making decorative pieces like boxes, trays, bowls, spoons, vases with flowers, purses, showpieces, plates, tumblers, etc.

Filigree work has variation according to the places too. While Orissa, where it is popularly known as 'Tarkashi', specializes in jewellery, 'Karim Nagar' is known for its complex designs and refined approach and precision. In Orissa figures of animals, birds and flowers and Konark Chakra are the favourite mementos that are depicted on jewellery. Various products, such as brooches, pendants, ladies bags, earrings and hairpins and utility items like the trays, plates, cups, candle stands bowls, ash-trays and incense containers, are also adorned with filigree work.

Gold Jewellery

Gold is a metal that lures many. It gives the security against any financial crisis, because of its easy liquidity, and is also used by women for adorning themselves. Traditionally, gold has been considered auspicious among Hindus and is regarded to be symbolic of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. Gold is symbol of perfection, immortality and prosperity; it is the substance that myths and legends are made of. It is a favourite for making jewellery, for the reason that it is anti-rust and has an everlasting shine.



Kancheepuram in southern India and Varanasi in northern India have been the centre of gold jewellery making since the historic times. Gold has been used in making of brocades and weaving. Zardozi, which was brought in India by Mughals, used gold thread in embroidery. An excellent craft, it is quite popular even today. Like other jewellery products, gold jewellery is typical to the region. Design and pattern of gold jewellery differs according to the area and tradition carried on historically.

Till date, there has been no historical evidence to shows that Indian women did not wear any gold jewellery anytime. Earrings, nose rings, bracelets, armllets etc., all have been a part and parcel of the women in India, historically. Indian gold jewellery got its international touch during Mughal period. The Mughals inspired Indian craftsmen to learn intricacies and nuances of jewellery making. During this period enameling, embedding stones in gold and filigree work attained great popularity.

During Mughal period, the gold jewellery of the hands and feet was extremely ornate. The reason was that women wore veils and the only exposed parts of their body were their hands and feet. Some major gold jewellery of India includes necklaces, nose rings, earrings, hair clips, waistbands or toe rings etc, all popular among Indian women. Besides the fact that gold jewellery lures Indian women most for obvious reasons, gold is believed to welcome Lakshmi. During Diwali, Goddess Lakshmi is worshiped and gold is almost invariably bought.

Handmade jewellery

Talking about jewellery manufacturing in India is as good as talking about handmade jewellery in India. A major chunk of jewellery in the country is made by independent craftsmen. Traditionally also, a significant part of jewellery manufacturing has been handmade jewellery. Big and feudal families used to have their personal jewelers, who would entertain their demand. These jewelers were expected to



design ornaments, keeping in mind the individual needs and desires of customers.

Though the old pattern is shattering and new trend of full-fledged jewelers have come up, the traditional patterns are still followed in rural areas. In case of occasions such as weddings, jewellery is often specially designed to match perfectly with the wedding outfit. The major USP of handmade jewellery is they are really aesthetic and hold a lot of appeal. Mastery of craftsman shines through the jewel, in the form of myriad designs, which is most admirable.

Handmade jewellery is an interactive process, where customer and craftsman sit in front of each other and decide on the design and pattern to be followed. This also asks for great deal of planning and re-planning, like finalizing designs, stones, metal and other embellishments and intricacies. Even during the process of making these ornate handmade trinkets, there are frequent consultations so that any required changes may be incorporated into the ornament.

Ivory Jewellery

Jewellery that is made from the tusk of an elephant is called ivory jewellery. Importance of ivory jewellery can be guessed from the fact that in Gujarat, the bride receives an ivory bangle from her family just before marriage as jewellery. During marriage ceremony wearing of ivory bangles is must for bride in some regions of the country. For example, in Rajasthan also, ivory bangles form a part of bridal jewellery. Other than bangles, ivory pendant that is attached to a necklace or earring is quite popular in India.



Ivory, being soft, can be shaped into desired designs and patterns. Its USP is it is light weight as well as its white colour, which makes it extremely attractive to people. Ivory is smooth and desired texture can be easily depicted on it. It is for these reasons it is popular among jewellery makers and customers. Ivory jewellery is not only popular in India, but the entire world. Historically speaking, ivory was used for making jewellery even before gold or any other metal, for that matter, was used for jewellery making. In the earlier time, ivory was painted or bleached and was considered an excellent material for carving.

With time, it started being used for the purpose of making jewellery. Though ivory jewellery has always been considered a traditional ornament, lately its charm has been observed in campuses in India. Those looking for cool stuffs go for ivory jewellery in general and ivory pendant, in particular. In fact, these days you will find many college students in India, wearing ivory jewellery. The major reason behind the popularity of ivory jewellery is the fact that it is available in different styles and patterns and is within the pocket money of college goers.

Jadau Jewellery

Jadau Jewellery forms one of the major examples of high skilled craftsmanship that was brought into India by Mughals. Historically speaking, the tradition of Jadau work has been in practice in the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat since the Mughal era. Jadau jewellery is also called engraved jewellery and is unique and a kind in itself. Considered to be a traditional jewellery of India, it is used in many traditional and auspicious occasions, like marriages and festival celebrations.



Though the art was introduced by in India Mughals, Indian craftsmen made it popular by adding their indigenous skills. In Jadau jewellery, precious and semi precious stones, gems, crystals and beads are embedded in gold, which is first melted a bit. When the gold becomes pliable, the stones are set on it with great precision and artistry. After that, it is allowed

to cool down and the stones and gems get fixed on it without any adhesive or carvings.

Jadau work is team work, where a group of craftsmen are involved together. Each craftsman carries out a specific task related to the jewellery creation. The chiterias make the basic design, ghaarias are responsible for engraving and making holes, Meenakari or enamelling is done by the enameller and the goldsmith takes care of the kundan or the gold. These days, Jadau is done on not just jewellery, but also jewellery boxes and delicate showpieces.

Uncut diamonds called polki or vilandi are used as the central stone. Meenakari or art work done at the back of the jewel is purely for beautifying purposes. Highest care and attention is given towards the detail on every piece that the master craftsman creates. The stone setters first set the stone in silver foil, then fuse with a finishing of pure gold.

Kundan Jewellery

During Mughal period, the art of kundan work reached Rajasthan from Delhi. Later on, craftsmen from the different part of the country migrated to the place and made Rajasthan a hub of Kundankari. Rulers and feudal lords gave patronage to the art and it developed into perfection. Today, Kundankari is known the world over, with Rajasthan serving as its epicenter. Kundankari is basically done on gold and silver jewellery. The beauty of kundan work lies in the precise setting of stones into kundan and the overall look of the ornament.



Traditional kundan jewellery has stones encrusted on one side and colourful and intricate meenakari on the reverse. The entire technique of Kundankari lies in the skillful setting of gems and stones in gold, which is rarely solid. Holes are cut for the gems, engraving is carried out and the pieces are enameled. The core of the ornament is made out of lac, a natural resin. Later, lac is inserted into the hollow parts and is then visible from the front, through the holes left for the gems. Highly refined gold or kundan is used to cover the lac and gems are then pushed into the kundan.

To increase the strength of the joints and to give it a smooth finish, more kundan is applied. Kundankari is such a specialized work that it is carried by a group of craftsmen, each carrying out a specific task. The chiterias make the basic design, the ghaarias are responsible for engraving and making holes, meenakari or enameling is done by the enameller and the goldsmith takes care of the Kundan or gold. The jadiyas or stone setters, set stones such as jade, agate, garnet, emerald, rock crystal, topaz, amethyst, and spinel into kundan.

Lac Jewellery

Lac jewellery, also known as lacquer jewellery, originated in Rajasthan and has gained considerable popularity in India today. Lac jewellery is available in versatile designs, which add to its beauty. Among the various items in lac jewellery, the bangles need a special mention. Bangles made of Lac are of bright colour and glass work done on them makes them more attractive. Rajasthani people believe that lac bangles bring good omen to those who wear them. They are very popular in Rajasthan and lately are being made in other parts of country too.



This prominent craft of Rajasthan was initially developed by tribal people of the state. Once the craft of tribal people, lacquer jewellery is now rage of urban India. The accessories made of lac attract everyone for obvious reasons. Some of the major accessories included in lac jewellery, like Bala, Bajuband, Rakhi, Jod, Gajra, Gokhru, Timaniyan, are extremely popular. A good chunk of the jewellery is

exported to outside world, which in turn provides more employment and inspires improvisation in design and pattern of jewellery.

The process of making lac jewellery is complex. Glass beads, flower shaped mirrors and decorative wire are also used for the enhancement of beauty of the jewellery. The bangles of lac consist of an inner-core that has a covering of thin layer of superior quality lac. Core lac, when mixed with a material similar to white clay, strengthens the bangle. The heating, mixing, kneading, and hammer pounding of the parched ingredients takes place repeatedly and dough like mass is formed.

Once this mass is heated, it is shaped further and the expansion of the lac takes place in lieu of bargained diameter. This results in thickening of bangle. Further, a tool (flat-shaped) is used to roll the bangle across the flat surface, which gives it a proper thickness. The shaping is done by suppressing the length of lac into grooves (coloured) on every side of the mould. The lac takes the shape of the groove into which it is forced. This process, which requires great precision, produces the most beautiful pieces of jewellery.

Meenakari Jewellery

In Meenakari jewellery, precious stones are set and then enameled with gold. Historically speaking, the art was introduced to Rajasthan artisans by Raja Mansingh of Amer. He invited Lahore-based skilled artisans to his kingdom, and their intermingling with the locals craftsmen resulted in an amalgam, which came to be known as Meenakari. Meenakari is also a team work, where specialization of skill is of paramount importance. As it is generally done on the reverse side of kundan jewellery, meenakar has to work with goldsmith, engraver or ghaaria, designer or chitteria as well as jadiya.



The art requires higher skill and its intricacy calls for application of technical mindset. In Meenakari, the piece of metal on which the work is to be done, is fixed on a lac stick. Designs of flowers, birds, fish etc are engraved on it. This leads to the creation of walls or grooves, to hold colour. Enamel dust, of required colour, is then poured into the grooves and each colour is fired individually. The heat of the furnace melts the colour and the coloured liquid gets spread equally into the groove. This process is repeated with each colour.

Subsequently, each colour is individually fired. Colours, which are most heat resistant, are applied first, as they are re-fired with each additional colour. Once the last colour has been fired, the object is cooled and burnished or polished with agate. The depth of the grooves, filled with different colours, determines the play of light. Silver and gold are used for the base of Meenakari. Choice of colours, in case of silver, has to be green, yellow or blue, as these are the colours which stick with it. As for gold, all the colours can be applied to it and this is also the reason why the metal is preferred for Meenakari jewellery.

Navratna Jewellery

In Navratna jewellery, nine auspicious stones are used in a single ornament. The belief behind this is that the nine stones together ensure well being of the person who wears it. In India, Navratna jewellery has been given major importance, because of its astrological significance as well as its innate charm. The nine stones used in the jewellery diamond, ruby, emerald, coral, pearl, sapphire, garnet, topaz, and cat's eye. As it is believed in astrology, each planet watches over one of the nine gems and offer power.



Shukra is the planet for the diamond, Sun for ruby, Saturn for sapphire, Rahu for garnet, Ketu for cat's eye, Moon for pearl, Guru for topaz, Buddha for emerald and Angaraha for coral. Navratna jewellery can be set in rings that are mounted, so that the stones touch the skin. The weight of the stones is decided according to the individual's astrological chart. In the following lines, we tell you about the significance of using the nine jewels.

Nine Stones in Navratna Jewellery

- Ruby protects against poisonous substances and banishes any evil spirits that hover around. It also gives energy to the wearer and changes colour if the wearer is in bad health.
- Emerald is an antidote for all stomach complaints, stings and bites. It is soothing to eyes, when mixed with saffron, and provides protection against poisonous insects or reptiles. It was used in ancient times, by mariners, to prevent storms. Emeralds are said to pale if the wearer is faced with deception. As it is the stone of the Goddess of Love, it helps lovers in their problems.
- Blue has always been the colour of enlightenment and in Buddhism, the wearing of Sapphire was said to increase devotion. In the West, bishops and cardinals also wore sapphires in ancient times. In spite of being held in sacred esteem, sapphires can also bring bad luck if worn by a person who does not have it as a birthstone.
- Coral is extremely popular, as it is a stone that is said to cure diseases, help the memory and act as a powerful protection against the evil spirits. That is perhaps why, it is often used in rosaries and made into chains for little children.
- Pearls give strength to the heart and are often used in Ayurvedic medicine. In India, pearls have always been a favorite ornament in royal courts.
- Garnet is found in many colours, though the best known is deep red, almost resembling a ruby. Garnets are often used to imitate precious stones, but have not been recorded as having any special properties of protection.
- Topaz is used for occult practices. It is used in the Middle East, for averting the evil, and is said to bring wealth and long life to the wearer. It can be golden yellow in colour and sometimes, even colourless.
- Cat's Eye is usually brownish yellow in colour. There is often a light line, which shines through the stone, giving the idea of the eye from which it derives its name.

Pachchikam Jewellery

In the world of fashion and design, old trends tend to come over again and again, though with slight changes. Pachchikam jewellery making craft is one of the examples of jewellery that has come back once again. Originated in Gujarat and Kutch, centuries ago, Pachchikam jewellery has again become popular and now, is very much in fashion. Many contemporary designers are today inspired by the art of Pachchikam jewellery and they are leading the way for further development in the art.

In comparison with Kundan work, Pachchikam has crude look and is pretty fragile. Major USP of Pachchikam is that instead of using gold for jewellery making, it makes use of silver and is thus, quite affordable. One of the reason for opting for silver as the base metal is that it is highly malleable and it closely resembles platinum, a precious metal. Pachchikam jewellery is quite flashy and can be worn on formal occasions. The process of making Pachchikam jewellery is also quite complicated



In this case, the stone is inserted in a silver case, the edge of which is pressed onto the stone with the finger and

then grooves are filed on it. A closer look shows a setting, which is crude in its execution, but it is in this quality that its aesthetical charm lies, making connoisseurs of beauty appreciate it. The workmanship involves a very laborious process, which is time consuming and tedious. Uncut semi-precious stones and glasswork are significant products used in making of Pachchikam jewellery.

The art is still kept in by families in Kutch and Gujarat, where it has been handed down from generations. The major hindrance in the growth of Pachchikam is that it cannot be produced on a mass scale. The craftsmen are highly conservative, not willing to change according to the needs and demands of time. They are not open to change in technical developments and are not experimenting with new trends and patterns. This regressive attitude, despite the fact that it has huge potential, is harming the overall growth of Pachchikam jewellery art and industry.

Silver Jewellery

Silver Jewellery, along with gold jewellery, is quite popular amongst Indian women. Ornaments made of silver, such as rings, bracelets, chains, necklaces, nose rings, earrings, toe rings, heavy kadas, and armlets, form integral part of Indian jewellery. Whereas gold jewellery has been the most popular among Indian women since ages, silver jewellery is not far behind in popularity. Apart from cities, it finds solace in the rural areas and tribal areas of the country as well. In fact, silver made jewellery is forms an integral part of the adoration and dress of tribal people.



Women in rural areas and tribal areas wear heavy silver jewellery for decoration. These heavy jewellerys are meant for financial security during contingency, apart from being a source of adornment. The practice of making new jewellery by melting old silver jewellery is still practiced in major parts of India, but recently new trend has been seen reversal in market. Old silver jewellery is in demand and in fashion now. Oxidized silver jewellery, with traditional designs that gives old and rough look, is quite popular these days.

Silver jewellery studded with gold, precious and semi-precious stones is quite popular, particularly in southern parts of India. The USP of these ornaments is that they are light weight and of reasonable cost. The versatility can be observed in silver jewellery, as different states have indigenous influence over its design. The pattern and precision differ according to region and likes-dislikes of people. Many times, one can determine the marital status of women as well as her community by the jewellery she wears.

Silver jewellery made at Kolhapur (Maharashtra), Hathras (UP), Salem (Tamil Nadu), and Rajkot (Gujarat) is of traditional design and of light weight. The traditional motifs and designs are adorned with precious and semi-precious stones. Such jewellery is quite popular all across the world, with large quantities being exported. Youngsters in cities can also be seen adorning themselves with silver jewellery, mainly owing to its wide variety and economical prices, as compared to gold and other jewellery.

Stone Jewellery

Jewellery studded with different gems is quite popular among Indians. For reasons ranging from spiritual to aesthetic to health, gemstone jewellery has become the part of life of Indian women and men both. These stone jewellerys are worn according to the individual's astrological chart and ruling of planet. Navaratna i.e. the combination of nine gems together, to form a necklace forms important part in the life and fashion of Indian women. These stones are believed to have extraordinary healing power.



Each gem in the mala has certain attributes of healing properties. Some stone jewellerys are believed to protect against poisonous substances and banishes any evil spirits that hover around. The commercial importance of gems has been increasing recently, for various reasons like their traditional role in the life of Indians and growing consciousness among people. It is believed that except for the emerald, all other precious stones were mined in India. India had developed technology of gem preparation even in early centuries of Christian era.

Diamond has been considered the best gem. It is found in at least six colours and has connotations for six deities. According to common belief, green is attached with Vishnu (the Preserver), white with Varuna (god of Oceans), yellow with Indra (god of Heavens), brown with Agni (Fire god), blue with Yama (god of Death) and copper coloured with the Maruts (Storm god). Besides the attachment of deities with each colour of diamond, a spotless diamond is considered the abode of deities. A perfect diamond is considered to be the one that could float in water and has six elevated tips, eight equal sides and twelve sharp edges.

Temple Jewellery

Indian jewellery art is at times divided into three kinds - temple jewellery, spiritual jewellery and bridal jewellery. Temple jewellery of India initially used to be described as the jewellery used to adorn the idols of Gods and Goddesses. The statues in India were ornamented with chunky necklaces that were either strung with beads or crafted with intricate filigree. Amongst the other ornaments that adorned statues of deities were large chunky bangles, usually studded with gems. In addition, earrings, nose rings and anklets were also used.



The jewellery used to adorn the idols was later worn by temple dancers and slowly, the designs became a part of the Indian woman's bridal jewellery trousseau. Though the idols continued to be decorated with jewellery, a practice seen even today, the jewellery of Indian women also came to be made on the pattern. Today, temple jewellery has become one of the most popular crafts of India. During festivals and occasions of worship of Gods, women wear temple jewellery, believed to be auspicious and offer good luck.

Jewellery items like pendants, bracelets, belts and brooches based on temple jewellery are very popular amongst women, during auspicious times, and wearing these is believed to bring fortune to the person. The favourite design for pendants is that of Ganesha - the elephant headed god known to bestow good luck and good fortune. The other emblem, which is also, very much in demand, is that of the sacred syllable OM. These days, the temple jewellery of India is finding a flavour amongst foreigners too.

Tribal Jewellery

Tribal jewellery in India is quite rich. Each tribe has kept its unique style of jewellery intact even now. The original format of jewellery design has been preserved by ethnic tribals. Jewellery that is made of bone, wood, clay, shells and crude metal, by tribals, is not only attractive, but also holds a distinct rustic and earthy charm. Tribal jewellery is made of the products that are available locally. The unrefined look of their jewellery is something that attracts people most. As has been said each tribe has its own indigenous jewellery craft, here is the list of the tribes, with their jewellery art described in brief.



Banjara

This nomadic tribe of Rajasthan is known for its colourful heavy jewellery. Beautiful ornaments and belts that are embellished with shells, metal-mesh, coins, beads, and chains are major jewellery art work by this tribe. This tribe provides huge collection of earrings, bracelets, bangles, amulets, anklets, hairpins and necklaces.

Bastar

The tribes of Bastar (Madhya Pradesh) make jewellery out of grass, beads and cane. Traditional ornaments made of silver, wood, glass, peacock feathers, copper and wild flowers are also popular. Necklaces made of one-rupee coins are also worn by the Bastar women.

Arunachal Pradesh

Tribes The tribes in Arunachal Pradesh make jewellery from cane and bamboo. They also adorn metal coin necklaces and waistbands of leather, studded with stones. These tribes use brass, bone, ivory, silver and gold in their jewellery too. In addition, colourful beads, blue feathers of birds, green wings of beetles are used to make ornaments. Karka Gallong women wear heavy iron rings that are coiled several times, while Wanchos make earrings of glass beads, wild seeds, cane, bamboo and reed.

Khasi, Jaintia and Garo

The people of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo tribes have typical sense of jewellery art. Thick red coral bead necklaces of the Khasis and Jaintias and thin fluted stems of glass, strung by fine thread, of the Garo tribe are interesting jewellery items.

Bhutia

The Bhutia tribe of Sikkim has also been known for making beautiful jewellery. The people of this tribe usually make use of gold, silver, coral, turquoise and zee stone.