

Craftsmanship and Cultural Diversity in Indian Jewellery: A Comprehensive Review

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ABSTRACT

This paper explains the different traditions amalgamated into the art of making jewellery in India. One will be astonished to see varied cultures in each region of the country with a unique piece and technique that caters to the local fashion. The accessories are not just pieces for beautifying but stood as master pieces to show the skill and labour that existed in India. It is interesting to know the different types of jewellery that are native to India and are explained here.

KEYWORDS: accessory, jewellery, Indian jewels types, fashion

1. INTRODUCTION

People who lived in forest used the fruits which can release dye to colour their body, the remains of the hunting as a dress and a chain. Later the trees, flowers, fruits and sand were used as a part of body ornamentation. The tattooing, painting, piercing, body modification is still practiced among various tribes around the globe. The people on deserts used to have cotton and linen fabrics to cover their genitals. In case of extreme cold conditions, the thick fur of bears after hunting were used to cover the body. The tooth, feathers and nails were used to make jewellery. Since the primitive days this has been the way humans were living their life. It is interesting to see necklace, earrings in each part of ear lobe, nose and brow piercings, lip clips, bangles, armlets, leg cuffs and tor rings were so common since the ancient civilisation. The reasons were numerous as pointed before. Needless to say they had implications on health, culture, social status, wealth, power and overall appearance.

With regard to India, the civilisation it followed has deep rooted traditions and scientific knowledge of everything they did. As one travels with history; we can understand that each zone in our country was flourishing in a unique form of making textile and jewellery. The body adorning was seen as a exhibit to showcase the story, culture, tradition, skills, craftsmanship, artistic ability and intellect. In order to support this, various forms of jewellery were famous in India which are described in this paper.

2. TYPES OF JEWELLERY

Bead jewellery: Since the time of Indus valley civilisation, which is five thousand years ago beads are used as an integral part of jewellery making. Commonly used materials include wood, gold, silver, copper, clay and ivory. Seed bead is the name given when very small size beads are used in the making of a statement piece.



Bridal jewellery: This as the name goes is a collective of jewels of the same pattern repeated in different sizes that can be used from head to toe. In olden days these were made of very rare and expensive materials along with gold. Later gold and silver were combined to create the entire set. Now these are made more trendy by use of diamonds, platinum, precious and semi-precious stones. The latest trend is the faux (guilt) jewellery that are been seen flooding the market which has huge varieties, from stones to gold, white to multicoloured to pearls.



Ceramic-Acrylic painted pieces: The ceramic is gaining huge popularity and has more convenience than plaster of paris in making jewellery. The ceramic powder is bought and made into shapes which can be stuck to each other when semi dry or by using a strong glue. The value addition is done using shading and bright shades of acrylic paint. These are very much unique pieces that are crafted by people with high levels of design sense and bought by people who love handmade stuffs.



Copper jewellery: These are made by burnishing and heat-treating the metals to get the earthy colours using man power. The twisted pieces of wire provide a very unique texture and fashion appeal. There are coloured copper wires too that are used in making hair clips, bracelet, chain, pendant and earrings.



Costume jewellery: Costume, Imitation or Faux jewellery. India is the second largest manufacturer of imitation jewellery after China. The market for fashion jewellery has increased on account of the sharp rise in gold and silver prices. Crystal, fashion and kundan jewellery are some of the popular costume jewellerys.

Enamel jewellery: The technique of applying resin or enamel which protects the painting below it is called enamelling. This is popular during Mughals reign and in Meenakari jewellery pieces.



Fashion jewellery: These are jewellery which are made from inexpensive materials like wood, ceramic, glass, paper, rope, rubber, leather, strings, corals, animal bone, nuts, shells, mosaic and clay. They are mainly designed for everyday wear and are comparatively very cheap. The commonly seen variety is where the wooden pieces are cut and the edges are smoothened. Using acrylic paint beautiful images are painted over the wooden piece.



Filigree jewellery: The elaborate cuffs seen in the movies like The Mummy personify very intricate patterns called Filigree. These are very popular in Italy, Spain and Egypt. The making involves high levels in precision, patience and a lot of understanding on the technicality.

German silver: These are cheaper than silver and are trend since the last decade. The black silver look of these jewellery are very popular with the kalamkaris and cotton saris formal wear looks. These are also called as oxidised pieces. Now, german silver wedding sets are very popular and even the brides are seen wearing them instead of gold. Nevertheless, the craftsmanship is equal on both.



Glass: These are made by blowing the medium glass to extend them as they are hot and transform them into a specific shape. The glass based are very popular in India for bangles and the current trend of having earrings.



Handmade jewellery: These are inclusive of ornaments that are made completely using man power and no machine cutting. The pieces made in this technique takes longer time and are costlier than the other ones commercially available. Most of the customised and designer pieces are handmade.

Ivory jewellery: The bride in Gujarat receives an ivory bangle before her wedding from her family as a gift, which she wears during the wedding. Ivory is the tusk of elephant a very beautiful and rare piece of medium used in jewellery making. The craftsmen are now using camel bone for it's similarities in hardness, texture and color to that of ivory. It is easy to do carving and the natural colour of ivory makes it more appealing.



Jadau jewellery: This engraved jewellery is native to Gujarat and Rajasthan. This was introduced in India by Mughals. It requires high level of craftsmanship in order to do this jewellery. It is also called gold enamel jewellery. The steps involved are the artist making a basic design, Ghaaris making holes in them, enamelling by another person and the kundan stones are kept in the last by another person.



Kundan jewellery: The art of using Kundan stones transcended to Rajasthan from Delhi. Kundankari was very much appreciated by the local patrons and the craft developed into the centre for Kundan jewellery in India. It is one of the oldest art forms used in making the high end jewellery for both sexes.



Lac jewellery: These are made by using the material lacquer in the native of Rajasthan. The huge variety of the lac jewellery is the biggest reason for its expanded market across the country. Lacquer along with white clay are used in the making of lac jewellery which is naïve to Bikaner. The mixture becomes like a dough that is further heated for setting of the shape. On the surface thin layer of silver foil, enamel colors, beads and stones are added.



Leather accessory: The waste bit of leather can be made into junk jewellery as its drape is very good. This aspect of flexibility makes them very much versatile to be made into any sort of accessory. The colour of leather can be matched with metal pieces that are trending in the field of men's bracelet market.



Meenakari jewellery: The precious stones are placed in the jewellery and enamelled with gold. A covering with red, blue, and green colour enamel adds its extravagant look to this kind of jewellery. Raja Mansingh of Amer, Rajasthan was the artist who invented this technique.



Metal, bells and balls: The heavy threads are now combined with each other and combined with an unusually big pendant and small bell like beads. These are mostly worn when the sari or the garment is plain, in order to bring all the emphasis on the accessory. It's the French way of creating attention to just one of the adornments.



Navaratna: In India, astrology is given a prominent place in peoples mind. Navaratna, consists of 9 different stones each special for specific star sign. The navaratna jewellery uses all the nine stones in one jewellery which is believed to bring in all good luck and charm to the wearer. The ruby protects against toxins and changes color in bad health condition. Emerald protects digestive health as it is an antidote for all stomach complaints, stings and bites. Heals eyes infections, to prevent storms in sailing and also to heal relationship issues. The blue stone helps in enlightenment and devotion. Coral protects from evil spirit, cure disease, increase memory power. Pearls give strength and recovery from illness along with the fact it is a luxurious ornament.



Garnet is a precious stone and Topaz for wealth and long life, Cat's Eye is known to have a line running in the stone which gave it the name.

Pachchikam jewellery: It was originated as a native jewellery of Gujarat and Kutch as was a peak fashion in the 16th century worshipped by the European travellers in India. This old-style fashion has revived and is back in trend. The base in which the stones are kept are either silver or gold foil. They resemble Kundan (Jaipur) in both intricate stone work and use of single uncut diamonds (Polkis) with other semi-precious stones.



Plastic jewellery: The unimaginable diversity in colour and designs along with the fact that they are available cheap are the main reason for the popularity with plastic jewellery. The kids are fashionable these days

compared to the old times. They are particular in wearing the accessories that are matching with the colour of the dress and also that they might be easily lost by the kids and so plastics are more preferred by the consumers.



Quilling with paper: Thin coloured strips of paper are rolled into quills which are combined in various forms that can be used as a chain, pendant, earring and bracelet. As a part of value addition pearls are sometimes used in the making of quilling jewellery. This is the most creative piece as it uses nothing but paper in mere curling. The small kit encompasses of a long needle like tool that helps in curling and holding the paper. Huge variety can be created in this technique of quilling.



Resin jewellery with Real flowers: The small sized flowers and leaves are dried in a book for few weeks and on completion of process they are placed in a mould along with epoxy resin. Care is taken to remove any air bubble and to purchase moulds with holes. Later on drying these are encased inside a metal frame and worn as a ring, bracelet, earring and pendants. Those who like nature are fond of buying such jewellery



Rose gold finish and temple jewellery: The current trend in luxury jewellery are the pieces with rose gold finish. The temple jewellery has images of god and goddess and resembles in images and sculptures seen in temples. Antique jewellery is another famous term used in the recent past that refers to designs from the age-old tradition that are no longer made. These can be explained as bringing back of old styles back in fashion. The rough finish and dull look are its characteristic feature.

Silver: 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. The regions near Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh can be evidences of the use of copper and silver jewellery from head to toe. The small beads at the bottom of the jewellery serve as a uniqueness along with its beautiful bell sound.

Tarakashi Jewellery (Orissa): It is made by twisting and bending very thin wires of silver imitating filigree type of jewellery. This is popular in Cuttack and in Indian temple Odissi dance. The entire set of the dance is silver in shade and the technique used in the jewellery is tarakashi. It includes the head decors to the anklets that are made using the mentioned technique called tarakashi.



Terracotta: This art form uses clay. The clay is mixed with binder and required designs are made with the clay. Care will be taken to define the hole through which the grouping of the pieces can be done later on. The biggest trend setting of the last few years was terracotta where kalamkari cotton saris were seen to be accessorised with terracotta jewellery. The unique ability to bring in exact shades of the sari in the jewel made is one of the reasons to make it very popular.



Thewa Jewellery: Native to Rajasthan this is made by fusing stencil of 22K gold sheet on a coloured glass. It takes one month for skilled artists to completely one piece as it is completely handmade. The design is drawn in free hand and the base glass is given a treatment to be shinier. This is a popular art in Pratapgarh, India which shows the culture, tales, romance, lifestyle and beauty of North India.



Conclusion:

This manuscript explains how tradition and craftsmanship were eyes iconic factors of Indian jewellery. No other country in the world have anything similar to the artistic skills or material handling for crafting to this level of excellence. There should be more awareness on these lost techniques and many fashion designers are working in parallel in reviving these traditions.

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