



SIGNIFICANCE OF JEWELLERY IN INDIA: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

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, pedants, 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

Introduction

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.

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 dwells with 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.

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 lords 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.

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, Necklace, Ear Rings, Nose Ring, Bangles, Arm Bands, Rings, Waist Band, and Anklets and Toe Rings.

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.

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 excavation 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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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. Nine Stones in Navratna Jewellery

- i. Ruby protects against poisonous substances and banishes any evil spirits that hover around.
- ii. Emerald is an antidote for all stomach complaints, stings and bites.
- iii. Blue has always been the colour of enlightenment and in Buddhism, the wearing of Sapphire was said to increase devotion.
- iv. 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.
- v. Pearls give strength to the heart and are often used in Ayurvedic medicine. In India, pearls have always been a favourite ornament in royal courts.
- vi. 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.
- vii. 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.
- viii. 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 of 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.

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. 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 forms an integral part of the adoration and dress of tribal people.

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.

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.

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 tribal. 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.

Conclusion

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

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