



Traditional to Contemporary Indian Jewellery: A Review

Punam Rani

Research Scholar, Department of Textile and Apparel Designing, I.C. College of Home Science, CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar-125004, Haryana, India

Vivek Singh

Assistant Professor, Department of Textile and Apparel Designing, I.C. College of Home Science, CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar-125004, Haryana, India

ABSTRACT

Since time immemorial jewellery has fascinated women of all ages. It has been a desirable possession and always lured them. But the trend in the jewellery designing has been subjected to change with the changing times. The jewellery designs and styles keep on changing with the change in lifestyle and tastes of people. The heavy and traditional designs in jewellery have been replaced with light and trendy contemporary designs. Traditional heavy gold and silver jewellery is now being replaced with light weight beads and platinum and crafted as per latest fashion trends. Now majority of designers craft customized styles of jewellery for individuals keeping in mind their client's taste, style, and preferences. The paper makes an attempt to review the existence of various types of Indian jewellery, their material, designs and changing trend.

KEYWORDS: Indian jewellery, material, designs and changing trends

INTRODUCTION

India has a long jewellery history, which went through various changes through cultural influence and politics for more than 5,000-8,000 years. By 1500 BC, the peoples of the Indus Valley were creating jewellery of various metals and beads. During this period the largest jewellery trade was of beads. Persian style also played a big role in India's jewellery. Each stone had its own characteristics related to Hinduism. The designs in solid gold jewellery of Tamil Nadu and Kerala are inspired by nature, while the Meenakari and Kundan styles of jewellery have been influenced by the Mughal dynasty. The ornaments of Tamil Nadu shaped like the sun and moon are set with precious stones. Assamese and Manipuri jewellery is influenced by local flora and fauna. They make use of items like shells, animal claws, teeth and precious and semi-precious stones.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The search for relevant literature was approached with broad perspective. The key words were Indian jewellery, material, designs and changing trends. The language was limited to English only. The quality of reference was assessed by using the criteria such as contribution of type of Indian jewellery, their existence, design, materials and changing trends especially in terms of customer's choices.

Since ages plant materials such as flowers, coconut shell, seeds, nuts, wood, grasses, bamboo and feathers are used for making jewellery (Jain 2010). With its ever changing trends, the jewellery industry has become as dynamic as the fashion industry. There is a constant churning of varied jewellery, launch of new ideas and innovation. Each season introduces you to a brand new range of jewellery or a reappearance of age old jewellery trends. Now a days people are very image conscious. They don't want jewellery as a symbol of financial security but to make a fashion statement and also as trends wear that suits different occasions. Today, we stand at the threshold of the new and unknown wherein, the new will definitely derive inspiration from the past and the unknown. Indian jewellery can be discussed under following heads:

Ivory Jewellery: It made from an elephant's tusk. Ivory, being soft, can be shaped into desired designs and patterns. In the earlier time, ivory was painted or bleached and was considered an excellent material for carving. With the changing time, it started being used for the purpose of making jewellery. Historically speaking, ivory was used for making jewellery even before gold or any other metal. In Gujrat and Rajasthan during marriage ceremony wearing of ivory bangles is must for bride. Other than bangles, ivory pendant that is attached to a necklace or earring is quite popular in India. Though ivory jewellery has always been considered a traditional ornament but these days its charm has been observed among college students. The major reason behind the popularity of ivory jewellery is that it is available in different styles and patterns and is within the pocket of college students (Fig: 1).



Figure1. Traditional to Contemporary Indian Jewellery

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. Kanchhepuram in southern India and Varanasi in northern India has been the centre of gold jewellery making since the historic times.

<http://www.fibre2fashion.com/industryarticle/22/2129/gold-jewellery-finest-jewelry1.asp> Indian gold jewellery got its international touch during Mughal period (Amit, 2009). In weddings especially in India, the bride is said to adorn herself with gold jewellery. The jewellery varies from maang tikka to toe rings. Filigree Jewellery is special type of gold and silver jewellery which involves lots of technicality and great amount of patience (Fig: 1). India's history of filigree work goes back to early centuries. It is immensely inspired by Greek filigree work, the same style and old charm has been kept till now, by Indian artisans. It is mainly popular in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. <http://www.culturalindia.net/jewellery/types/filigree-jewelry.html> In Orissa filigree jewellery is popular as Tarkashi jewellery, in which animals, birds, flowers motifs and chakra are depicted. According to Alexander, (2010) Vadaseri or Kemp Jewellery is another popular gold jewellery from is the town of Vadaseri and hence is named so. In this jewellery combination of Red & green color glass stones or rubies/emeralds with pearls (as droplets or strands) set in gold or silver. It is commonly known as temple jewellery as jewellery used to worn by temple dancers and slowly, the designs became a part of the Indian woman's bridal jewellery.

Now a days fringes, colored gems and different textures or enamels also appear more often in gold jewellery. It comes in naturally inspired designs especially in 14k and 18k jewellery. Coloured alloys such as

nickel, aluminium and copper are added to the gold to craft delicate and elegant colored gold jewellery. Digital gold jewellery designs are becoming popular day by day

Silver Jewellery: Women in rural areas and tribal areas wear heavy silver jewellery for self adornment. Apart from being a source of adornment it is also meant for financial security during contingency. Ornaments made of silver, such as rings, bracelets, chains, necklaces, nose rings, earrings, toe rings, heavy kadas, and armlets, form an integral part of Indian jewellery. Indian tribal jewellery is mainly made of the silver along with varieties of products that are available locally. The unrefined look of their jewellery is something that attracts people most. The Banjara tribe of Rajasthan is known for its heavy silver jewellery. Beautiful silver ornaments and belts that are embellished with shells, metal-mesh, coins, beads, and chains are the major jewellery of this tribe. This tribe provides huge collection of earrings, bracelets, bangles, amulets, anklets, hairpins and necklaces. The tribal of Arunachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh also make use of jewellery made from silver, brass, bone, ivory, cane and bamboo. Silver jewellery made at Kolhapur, Hathras, Salem and Rajkot is of traditional designs and these designs adorned with precious and semi-precious stones. This jewellery is quite popular all across the world, with large quantities being exported. Oxidized silver jewellery, with traditional designs that gives dull and rough antique look, is quite popular now a days and people, who value the exclusiveness of antique ornaments, go for it (Kelly, 2011) (Fig: 1). Now light weight silver jewellery with platinum finish is also available in the market.

Gemstone Jewellery: The most popular and commonly used gemstone jewellery is Navratna jewellery, which has nine auspicious stones i.e. Diamond/ Zircon, Ruby, Emerald, Coral, Sapphire/Turquoise, Garnet, Topaz, Pearls and Cat's Eye are used in a single ornament (Fig: 1). Now a day's new semi - precious inexpensive coloured gems are popular. The latest trend in gemstone jewellery is that it being cut in unusual shapes such as tongue, sugarloaf, bullet and various outline shapes. Some of the newest gemstone jewellery designs are taking inspiration from 1960s designs.<http://www.culturalindia.net/jewellery/types/navratna-jewelry.html>

Jadau Jewellery: The style of this jewellery inspired by Mughals and greatly patronized by the Rajputs of Rajasthan. Traditional Jadau jewellery has stones encrusted on one side and colorful and intricate meenakari on thereverse. One side of the jewellery is engraved, enameled with meena and the other is embedded with uncut kundan stones and is further decorated with beads. <http://www.culturalindia.net/jewellery/types/jadau-jewelry.html>. 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 kundan jewellery. Rajasthan is a hub of Kundankari. Kundankari is basically done on gold and silver jewellery. Traditional kundan jewellery has stones encrusted on one side and colourful and intricate meenakari on the reverse. Now a days, lac is inserted into the hollow parts which is

then visible from the front. Highly refined gold or kundan is used to cover the lac and gems are then pushed into it. In Meenakari jewellery, precious stones are set and then enameled with gold. Historically speaking, the art was introduced to Rajasthan artisans by Raja Man Singh of Amer. Meenakari is essentially enameling or decorating the metallic surface of jewellery with colors (Fig: 1). The colour portions are engraved for shallow depressions and the enamel dust of the required is then poured into those engravings and heated at high temperature and finally polished for luster. Exclusive lac jewellery known as lacquer jewellery is very popular in Rajasthan. It is available in versatile designs, which add to its beauty. Among the various items in lac jewellery, the bangles are most popular one. Bangles made of Lac are of bright color and glass work done on them makes them more attractive.

Bead Jewellery: In Mughal era bead necklaces of different size and shapes, made up of precious and semi-precious stones, were quite popular. Later on, when Europeans came to India, the bead work became more transparent and semi-transparent. Now a days India is the largest producers of colored glass beads, crafted metal beads and semi-precious stones beads and particularly, the beads produced in Banaras are exported in large quantities. The use of these beads gives rise to glamorous and eye-catching contemporary jewellery designs. Karnal city of Haryana is also known for hollow beads made out of silver (Jessica, 2010). The pearl, gemstone, wooden, metallic, glass, crystal beads etc. are available in a range of beautiful natural colours and shapes are used to make beautiful designs of bracelets, necklaces, anklets, earrings etc. These days, beads made out of sterling silver are gaining popularity.

Fashion Jewellery: Fashion jewellery is also called costume jewellery, it is not made of precious metals and stones, rather lighter and inexpensive materials are used (Fig: 1). It is trend-conscious and keeps on changing as per changing needs. For those who are willing to do experimentation with new and unusual designs, shapes and colours, costume jewellery offers a range of choices. <http://www.culturalindia.net/jewellery/types/fashion-jewelry.html>. Fashion jewellery designers use inexpensive products, like jute, leather, plastic, wood, bone, stone, oxidized metal, horn, lac, etc. rather than using precious ingredients, like gold, silver, platinum etc. In India also, the concept of fashion jewellery is very much prevalent, especially amongst the college going teenagers as these are inexpensive, one can get a wide variety and also keep up with the changing fashion.

CONCLUSION

With its ever changing trends, the jewellery industry has become as dynamic as the fashion industry. There is a constant churning of varied jewellery items, launch of new ideas and innovation. Each season new range of jewellery are introduced or a reappearance of age old trends can be witnessed. Technological advancements have brought about a whole new dimension to the jewellery in terms of the cuts, shapes designs and finishes. There are many BIS approved jewellery stores all over the world and also the distributors for the big brands like D'dmas and Nakshatra diamonds.

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