

Metaphor of Indian Jewellery - comparing the past and present trends

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■ **ABSTRACT :** This paper explains the journey of jewellery from the pre-historic times and Mughal era to the present-day faux jewellery. The excavations of the ancient civilisations, have proved that cave man decorated his body using the remains of hunting including the feathers, tooth, paws, skin, tusk and even beaks. Today, various types of materials are used in the making of jewellery which including gold, diamond, emerald, platinum and pearl. Along with the fact that each state and its dance form have a unique form of costume and jewellery which depicts their culture and lifestyle. Jewellery here holds a very prominent place. It is Indians way of life to decorate them from head to toe, but the science and meaning behind them are briefed in this paper.

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Human beings always loved adorning themselves in order to show their status, power, likes, sex appeal and creative skills. The theories on clothing highlights how mankind was suffering with boredom of everyone looking alike, and quickly decided to use resources from nature to beautify them. Primitive men used leaves, twigs, nuts, fruits, coloured sand, clay, insects, bird excreta and even rocks as a medium to colour their body. There are stories that narrate how the hunters take some risky efforts and bring the rarest of feathers to their King and Queen. We can also see the evidence of ranking among the soldiers by using bark, fruit and feathers in a unique fashion based on each cadre. There were various forms of art work that was followed by primitive men, including the tattooing, full body painting,

body sculpting and modification, body piercing (creating scars) in order to show their uniqueness, social status, sex appeal, custom and culture, strength, spiritual belief and at times even for health reasons. Establishing an identity in the crowd is always important. This was done by textiles and accessories, where the former has hidden potentialities to create a strong non-verbal communication.

History:

Jewellery always an internal art living in India. There are many evidences that claim the use of different kinds of ornaments to decorate oneself from head to toe. The Indus Valley near Pakistan had a very prominent civilisation which dates back to 2500 BC. The

excavations in those areas (part of India, then) have proved that Indians had a great sense of taste for adornment. The early forms included use of flowers like orchids which were inserted in the ear lobes of men and women. Ivory, metal, crystal, tiger claw, antelope horns were commonly used in making jewellery. Evidences show hair colouring was a common among warriors especially with colour red to symbolise life and courage. Beads of amber, coral with no definite shape was seen to have polished made round and used as a neckpiece. There were strong beliefs that these materials helped in preventing cold, cure jaundice and had medicinal values to cure vitamin D deficiency.

Mughal Empire:

Jewellery took a huge transition to the next level during the Mughalian dynasty (15th-17th century). The ultimatum of craftsmanship was seen with the ornaments made during this era. It was a glorious period for India. Beautiful motifs, Persian inspired motifs, craftsmanship, patience, detailing, bright and bold colours, luxury metals on the pieces were some of the reasons for the excellence of the pieces created in this era. The saris were made in gold, human figures, birds, epic stories were all easily seen as designs in these ornaments. The wide range of accessories include head gear, hair clips, engraved combs, neckpieces, amulets, bracelets, bangles, waist belt, nath, anklets and toe rings. Everything was unique and invited the attention of whole world on India for the intricacy seen in the jewellery created. The pieces were completely handmade and mostly made as “one-piece” in a design.

Men were seen with less jewellery but more variety. The head turban was seen adorned with bird shaped pendants along with layers of chain made of pearls, jewels and feathers on the top to increase the height of the turban and add a touch of royalty. Huge pendants with stones armlets, bracelets and arm bands were commonly spotted as fashion pieces in this period. Indians wore many rings in different designs and patterns. The interconnected bangle and ring were a fashion. Mughals loved rigid collar neck pieces like the modern day chockers, but with extreme embellishments that portray their supremacy and creative skills. There was a noteworthy thumb ring called archers ring which was used to increase the distance of an arrow during the fights and hunting. A curved jade ring was also very

popular with the stones like diamonds, rubies, gold and worn between thumb and forefinger. The other unique accessory was baldric belt which is worn across the chest from the left shoulder which is like a belt. It helps in holding the weapon in place (<https://www.boldsky.com>; <https://www.culturalindia.net>).

Local culture reflects in the jewellery:

India has both contemporary and modern day look in their ornaments. It can be classy, heavy gold as in the south or the light weight collections in the middle east or the silver jewellery in the north each region has a strong culture in terms of ornaments. Kundan, meenakari, filigree, wire, copper, ivory was some of the popular styles in India. The use of heavy gold in south, silver in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, the natural resources in the accessories of Assam, infusing the shells, teeth, claws, semi-precious stones in the Manipuri jewellery and enamel painting in central india were some examples of the diversity that exists.

Unique jewellery for each dance forms:

In India, no matter which status a woman came from, it is rare to see her without any jewellery. Every dance of the state, had special forms of jewellery to make it visually more appealing. Bharathanatyam, Kathakali, Katak to quote some are distinctive and unique with their costumes and jewellery. Indian jewellery has unique designs, intricate workmanship and stunning designs which has been made with delicacy and patience, which is always respected by the whole world. The culture of adornment with jewellery was not restricted with human but also in worshipping Gods (religious belief), elephant, cows and horses (<https://www.utc.edu>).

Jewellery types:

In today's world, a Jewellery is more than an accessory. The basic classification are of three types namely - Fine jewellery, Bridge jewellery and Costume Jewellery.

– Fine jewellery is generally thought of as jewellery that uses 14 kt. Gold or other precious metals and precious gems like diamonds, sapphires, rubies or emeralds. Fine jewellery can be mass-produced or artisan-made one-of-a-kind pieces or limited-edition.

– Costume jewellery can also be artisan-made or mass produced. Materials used in the designs are base

metals, glass, plastic and other synthetics. They also may use shell, wood and other organic materials.

– Bridge jewellery is called that because it is the bridge between Fine jewellery and Costume jewellery. It may use vermeil, gold filled or silver as the metal and uses semi precious stones such as amethyst, citrine, turquoise, jade, topaz, fresh water pearls, garnet and others. Much Bridge jewellery is artisan-made, but it can also be mass produced. Fine jewellery is the most expensive and Costume jewellery as an inexpensive alternative. Bridge jewellery falls between these two on price.

Raw materials for making jewellery:

In our country, different metals were used in making ornaments. Emeralds, rubies, garnets, amethysts, corals, sapphires, and turquoises are among the stones which are used for the enhancement of gold and silver jewellery. Other popular ones include diamond, gold, platinum, white gold, uncut diamond, silver, german silver and pearls. In recent times plastic, wood, clay, terracotta, mud, ceramic, glass and even papers are used in making jewellery. The wood, mud and plastic symbolise the north Indian jewellery whereas the south has more of gold-based ornaments. The diverse culture exists not just on the textiles but also in the jewellery. When a child is born, ear piercing and shaving of birth hair in the head is done. When a girl child attains puberty, her marriage, pregnancy and until death various ceremonies involve in gifting of gold or traditional jewellery. It is believed that jewellery is the best form of gifting especially when it is made from precious metals like gold.

Women of any class will have a collection of jewellery which has been passed by generations or earned as a property for their family that she values with all her heart. The mangalsutra which is a jewellery for women worn during the wedding by her groom is accompanied by toe ring which symbolises her fertility and position in the society. Some traditions gift glass bangles during these ceremonies which are kept like a treasure along with the bridal trousseau. Jewellery is always associated with femininity. It is due to the varied nature of activity that men do which includes like hunting, moving around for getting food, shelter, clothing, fighting, protecting, too many jewelleries were never worn by them. In both cases jewellery was never a piece of decoration but has extremely strong scientific meaning which is associated

with health and integrity.

Gold: Star dust on earth:

The colour of gold is associated with sun. The brightness and supremacy is forever relished. White gold is now commonly seen in wedding rings of the United States of America. White gold, black gold and rose gold are shades that are made by mixing alloys. Gold plated is another version which has the layer of gold only on the top region. This is done to reduce the cost. When neutron stars collided (meteorites) and fell on earth, the super nova when reaching earth are stuck inside the deepest core of earth. The star dusts are gold which one day may be emptied or gone scare. In the eighteenth-century Africa was the largest supplier of gold with the biggest mines in the world. The fame of this yellow shiny metal is never fading and is a gift of treasure that is given by nature. An additional information is that surprisingly Gold is found in sea water also, the processing of which is also done (<https://www.thebetterindia.com>; <https://www.joya.life>).

Diamonds:

They were discovered first in India and today South Africa is the largest supplier to the whole world. During the Victorian era, diamonds from India were very famous. The word diamond means adamant which symbolise its nature. They can break and shatter but cannot be completely destructed. On a long period, they tend to turn into granite. Diamonds are the most valuable gem in the world. The blue diamond and Kohinoor (Guntur) are very popular ones. The former is supposed to bring bad luck and the latter is currently in the Tower of London.

Emerald:

They are more valuable than diamonds. The high-class gem includes diamond, emerald, red sapphire, emerald, opal and pearls. The mid-class gem are aquamarine, tourmaline, Dan Tanzanite, world natural zircon, spinel, etc. and the low-class gems were the garnet, topaz, crystal, peridot, lapis lazuli, turquoise. The Taj Mahal Emerald is a very unique piece from India that has intricately carved stylised flowers that decorate the Taj Mahal.

Pearl:

By analysing the reports we can understand that

one among thousand oysters have pearl. This suggests that most of the pearls found in the market are man-made. There are star signs for which wearing pearls are believed to bring luck. The shine, colour, texture, shape and everything about pearls are scintillating. It has been used both masculine and a feminine jewellery, which stands as one main reason for its popularity in India. Hyderabad pearls are known for its charm worldwide (www.myweddingplanning.in).

Platinum:

In the 18th century Cartier introduced platinum which overtook gold in the recent past.

Current trends:

Layered light weight chains:

Today people do not desire for heavy jewellery. The short chain with three to four layers and small trendy pendants is believed to be of most attraction among the consumers.

Choker/Neck bands:

The funny way of saying it has been inspired from the dog cuffs, these are very iconic in the twentieth century. Made out of velvet and metal, the neck bands are a fashion item that's both affordable and loud.

Ear cuffs:

Ear cuffs are a huge bomb in creating a completely trendy look. The embellished ear cuff which can be worn separately behind the ear, can be a very iconic piece to beautify ears.

Bracelets:

The watches are seen to be sold with three to eight layers of bracelets. The bohemian culture is ramping the fashion with multi-layered, contract pieces worn as one to create a messed-up look that's a characteristic feature of the savy culture.

Statement pieces:

The neckpieces that are extremely heavy and wholesome are making a strong foot print in the market. Heavy neck pieces for both affordable and using the rare materials are available for the consumers to create their desired look.

Mineral jewellery:

These are the most stunning pieces that give an outlook that the nature has been used directly for accessorising. The unpolished mineral pieces of jewellery are going to become an integral part of 2019 fashion.

Ears multiple piercing:

The earlobe piercing has become more popular where young women are seen with more than eight earrings pierced as a mark of fashion.

Finger rings:

The rings that don't extend till the end of the finger but is half way through which also marks a new trend in fashion.

Eye wear:

The eye wear or shades, mirrored and cat eye glasses are a trend.

All the above are designs and styles that may not have greater significance to the health and quality of life. It is not to point that the current fashion is pointless but to bring awareness on how the Indians lived once with good health and value for living. The science behind each of the jewellery are explained as below.

Scientific meaning behind Indian jewellery:

Tika:

It is a chain like and has hook on one end and a decorated pendant on the other end. Worn above the forehead in the centre. The centre part of the forehead has the chakra, which is believed to have two petals symbolising male and female, its cohesion at physical and mental state. Two different elements connected and no separation – a spot that is expected to be protected

Nose ring:

Various shape, size, colour as a motif with a stand and a button or clips on the nose and stays by mere pressing on the top and bottom of the nose. Near the side of nose, in one of both, by married and unmarried women. It is believed that evil spirits enter the body through the openings. The metal on other way helps to eradicate spirits. For this reason, the metal is laced near nostrils so that negative vibrations do not enter the body. Aristocratic family's gift elaborate nose rings during wedding rituals as it is considered to be very auspicious.

Scientifically it is believed that the brain's wavelength can be controlled through piercing the nose. Also, it is proved that women with pierced nose experience less pain during child birth as the nerves are directly connected to the reproductive organ.

Ear ring:

Various shape and size. Lobes and the base are utilised for earrings. It has nerves that connects the cervix, brain and kidney. Giving right amount of pressure in ears helps in wellbeing of kidney and bladder.

Necklace:

From the throat level to upper abdomen the level of the neck chain can vary. Worn near heart. Believed to control the emotion and strength then love for the better half. Stones (Ruby, emerald) were worn in old days with a belief that it will protect the wearer with its supreme power. This piece of jewellery is believed to bring luck and ward away evil.

Bangles:

Circle in shape made of wood, metal, gold, glass, silver, copper, mud, glass, ceramic, paper, silk threads, embroidered fabric. Near wrist. Worn by women of all class both rich and poor. Tinkling sound is good like the sound of flowing water. It helps in building good health, romance and well being of a person. Adds feministic beauty and in days when women were not allowed to speak, the bangles are believed to express her feelings secretly. Scientific evidences prove that the bangles movement in the hands resemble pressure therapy and helps in improved blood circulation on the outer skin. The movement helps in increasing the strength of the bones, by absorbing energy from earth and transmitting them to the body through the gold and silver metals.

Toe ring:

Small ring like structure mostly made of silver or copper. Worn on second and third finger. It helps in regulating the menstrual cycle in women. The silver toe ring can absorb the energy from earth and add to the body keeping it refreshed. The nerves in the toe help in connecting uterus through the heart. During house hold activities that movement helps in creating vibrations that will enable in a healthy reproductive organ. In India, men are also subjected to wearing the toe ring, which is how

ever removed soon after wedding due to personal choices of comfort.

Ring:

Made of various types of metals and materials. The trend in these days is to wear gem stones based on the stars and astrological beliefs. All the fingers can be adorned with a single or a multilayer or interconnected ring. The ring worn on the fourth finger from thumb makes a person more confident and with good health as it is connected to the neuron cells in the brain. The reason for wearing the wedding ring in the middle finger is synonymous with the fact that the nerves there are connected with the heart and it will help in controlling the emotions of the wearer.

Mangalsutra:

Black beads or yellow thread with gold and precious stones and metals. Worn by the groom for the bride during wedding symbolising the completion of wedding. The reason for wearing it by married women is the fact that it can control the blood circulation and pressure in the body of the wearer. It stands as a symbol of love and commitment between married couple in India.

Hip chain/ waist belt:

Made of metal like gold. Worn around the hip. It is worn by both by men and women in the last century. They were worn for enhancing digestive system and reduce abdominal fat. When worn tight also helps in controlling over eating due to cinched waist.

Bindi:

Apart from the jewellery the forehead bindi which is kept in between the brows are seen as a mark of respect, reverence and love for the person who wears it. Scientifically it is believed that the chakra at that point has to be protected by keeping a cover so that women cannot be subjected to tricks like mesmerisation. After getting married the sindoor or the bindi is applied on the forehead to indicate the marital status. The combination of mercury and turmeric helps in keeping the blood pressure in control and also increase the sexual drive. It is for the same reason connected with sexual affiliation that widows were restricted from wearing sindoor. The actual method in olden days was wearing sindoor from the forehead to the back of the pituitary gland (<https://>

www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrjSSLZpSn0; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raYfOHWHzCo>; <https://www.britannica.com>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgdvUTDyzB4>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZeBqWC0X3s>).

Conclusion:

For more than 2,000 years, India was the sole supplier of gemstones to the world. Golconda diamonds, sapphires from Kashmir and pearls from the Gulf of Mannar were coveted and drew merchants across land and sea to India. For the rulers, jewels were a statement of power, prosperity and prestige. This paper has briefed about the rich tradition behind Indian ornaments along with the latest trends. The younger generation should remember that being adhered to the culture and tradition is definitely not old fashioned. Considering the facts and reason for wearing the Indian jewellery. It is important to understand, appreciate and follow the traditions for a better quality of life.

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