

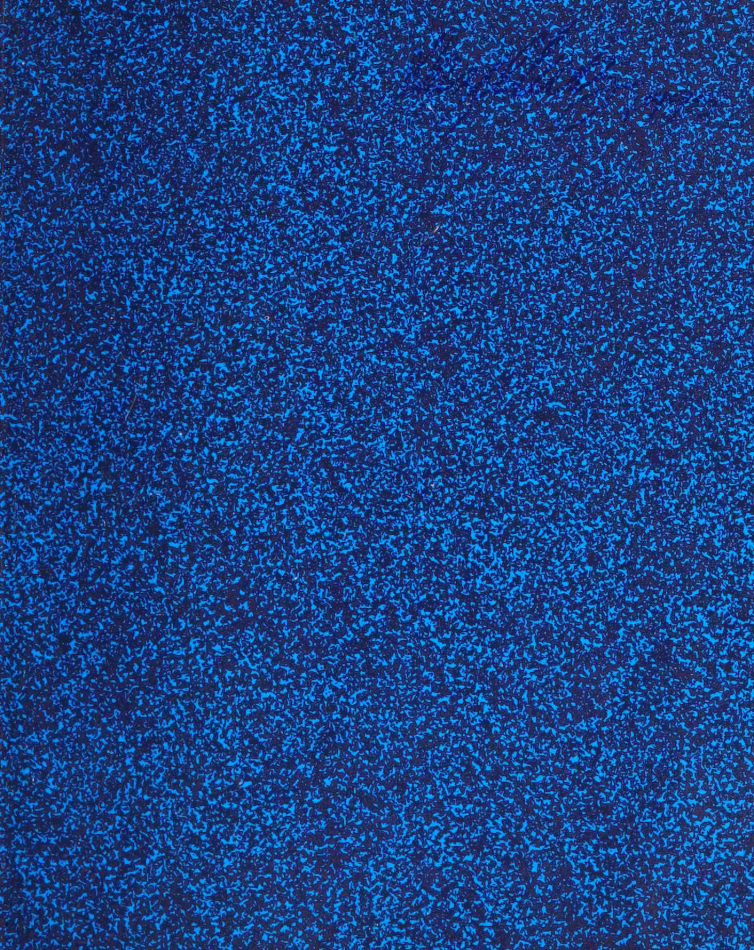
CLASSIC INDIA
JEWELLERY



The Classic India series portrays the panorama of India's cultural heritage. For centuries India was perceived as the land of fabulous riches, of wisdom, of mystique and romance. It is this magic that the series captures. It provides a window to one of the world's most ancient civilisations — anachronistic at times, but most often vibrant and alive today. A collector's item, each book in this series is a visual delight.

Indian jewellery has a variety with few parallels in the world. Apart from being a means of ornamentation, it has great cultural and religious significance too, with certain ornaments worn on specific occasions. Aesthetically, it stands apart from western jewellery in that each item is painstakingly handcrafted. Seen here are pieces photographed in Delhi and Jaipur, two significant centres of jewellery.

Cover : Kundan and minakari pendant of diamonds and pearls



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Wazlitz
1995

JEWELLERY

© Rupa Classic India Series 1994
First published 1994 by Rupa & Co
7/16 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110 002
Set in 9.6 on 12 Palatino by Fototype, Green Park
Printed in India by Pragati Art Printers
Hyderabad-500 004
ISBN 81-7167-227-2

Design : Arun Vaidya
Artwork : K D Prashad
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JEWELLERY



Photography by Dinesh Khanna

Rupa & Co

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Publisher expresses gratitude to Maliram Puranmal and to Bhuramal Rajmal Surana, Jaipur, and to Rakesh Seth, Delhi, for allowing the jewellery in this book to be photographed. Special thanks are due to Rakesh Seth for his help and guidance and to Sudha Ramchandani for her personal interest.

Credits

Maliram Puranmal : 9, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 23, 37, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 62

Bhuramal Rajmal Surana : 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 26, 34, 35, 36, 43, 44, 56, 57, 58, 61

Rakesh Seth : Cover, 10, 11, 17, 19, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 38, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46, 52, 53, 60

INTRODUCTION

Bernier, a traveller to India noted: "The empire was an abyss of gold and silver, in the first place, because so much was melted, remelted and wasted in fabricating women's bracelets, both for the hands and feet, charms, earrings, nose and finger rings.... The quantity of these articles made in India is incredible. All the troops, from the omrah to the man in the ranks, will wear gilt ornaments, nor will a private soldier refuse them to his wife and children, though the family should die of hunger..."

This quotation, albeit 17th century, signifies the importance of jewellery in India where even today, the burden of debt accompanying the enormous outlay at Hindu marriages is relegated to a nebulous future. Gold, after all, is associated in India with Lakshmi, the Goddess of Prosperity and precious stones are believed to possess the power to modify the influence of the planets.

Cultural and religious overtones apart, the jewellery of India has an incredible repertoire of designs and techniques. Both, interestingly, have traditions of almost unbroken continuity. Ancient sculptures, frescoes and paintings such as those at Sanchi, Amravati, Orissa and Ajanta demonstrate the similarity in styles of ancient jewellery to what is still worn.

Kundan necklace with gold beads





Kundan necklace of gold, pearls and diamonds



Gold necklace with kundan pendants



Rudraksha necklace with gold pendant and a hollow box for amulet (South India)



Front

Kundan and minakari necklace of diamonds and Basra pearls



Reverse



Front

Kundan and minakari necklace of diamonds



Reverse

Kundan and minakari necklace of diamonds and pearls

Front



Reverse



Coral necklace with gold pendant (South India)





Necklace of Basra pearls with kundan pendant

SOLA SHRINGAR

The Sixteen Traditional Aids to Beauty

Haar	:	<i>Necklace</i>
Mangalsutra	:	<i>Wedding chain</i>
Kanthi	:	<i>Choker</i>
Balon ka haar	:	<i>Flowers for the hair</i>
Angoothi	:	<i>Ring</i>
Hathphool	:	<i>Bracelet with ornament for the palm and rings for the fingers connected with chains</i>
Kada	:	<i>Bracelet</i>
Bazuband	:	<i>Arm band</i>
Kardhani	:	<i>Waist belt</i>
Rakhri	:	<i>Worn on the parting of the hair</i>
Tika	:	<i>Worn on the forehead</i>
Nath	:	<i>Nosering</i>
Jhumka	:	<i>Earring</i>
Bichhwa	:	<i>Toe ring</i>
Pahzeb	:	<i>Anklet</i>
Ghungroo	:	<i>Ankle bells.</i>

Right : *Necklace of pearls, rubies and emeralds*





Pond jewelry with beads and intricate carvings



Necklace of pearls and sapphires with kundan pendant



Gold necklace (South India)

Kundan necklace with gold mirror and glass



Pearl and minakari necklace



Gold necklace with semi-precious stones



Gold necklace with kundan pendant





Gold earrings



Front

*Kundan and minakari earrings of diamonds and
Basra pearls*



Reverse

Kinshasa necklace and earrings of semi-precious stones







Gold necklace with pearls



Minakari and kundan earrings



Minakari and kundan earrings



Minakari and kundan earrings



Minakari kangan (bracelet) with pearls





THE ANCIENT CRAFT OF MINAKARI

"The jeweller causes a design to be prepared by a professional artist. He then mounts it to the surface of gold-silver, who forms the article to be enamelled. It is then passed on to the grinder, the chaser or engraver, who engraves the pattern, hollows out the plate, and hatches the floor of the pits to increase the play of colours of the translucent enamel and to cause it to adhere with greater tenacity. The enameller or minakar polishes and burnishes the plate and then applies his colours in the order of their hardness or power of resisting fire. Some of the colours can be heated at the same operation, others are so sensitive as to require to be dealt with alone.

All the colours which are known can be applied to gold. In the order of hardness the colours are white, blue, black, yellow, pink, green and red, the purest with red of last sort being the most fugitive, and the most beautiful in the eyes of artists.

The piece, after it is fired, is polished with kur and vermillion. The last process is to repolish the ornament, to heat it gently and to cleanse it by packing it in a strong milk solution made from fruit. From the enameller the article, if it has to be set with gems, goes on to another workman, according to the special style of setting which is required."

Thomas Holben Hendley (1909)

Left: Minakar and kumar kadas (Jewellers and Enamellers)



Goldkettchen (Zinn) 1911

Gold kamarband (waist band)







Kundan bazuband (arm band) with semi-precious stones

Left : *Gold bazuband*

Kundan hathphool (bracelet with attached centre piece for palm and rings) of semi-precious stones





Kundan haldili (pendant) with diamonds and precious stones



THE GOLDSMITH'S TOOLS

The sunar or goldsmith rarely uses machinery of any kind. His implements are simple but with their aid he produces intricate pieces of extraordinary beauty.

- Angetha : *Furnace. This is made from an earthenware waterpot.*
- Gharya or Kutali : *Crucible. This consists of a small clay cup.*
- Nal or Phunkni : *Blowpipe*
- Banqual : *Small, curved blowpipe*
- Reza or Pargahni : *Mould*
- Nihai : *Small anvil*
- Hathaura : *Hammer*
- Chimta or Chimti : *Large or small tongs*
- Samsi or Zambur : *Pincers*
- Kati : *Scissors*
- Sohan or Reti : *File*
- Cheni : *Chisels*
- Janta : *An iron plate with holes for drawing wire*
- Pasa or Kansula : *A metal cube with circular hollows for moulding round ornaments*
- Thappas : *Dies for patterning*

Left: Gold tika (South India)

Kundan and minakari pendant with diamonds

Front



Reverse





Front

*Kundan and minakari pendant of diamonds,
rubies and pearls*



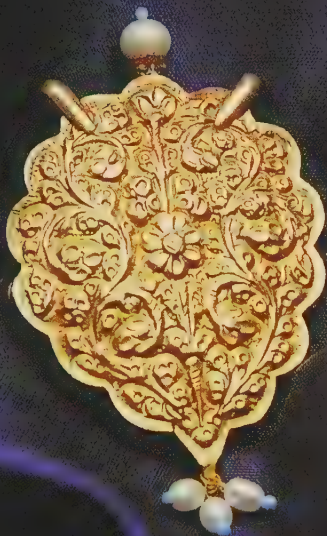
Reverse

Kundan and chitai work (carving) on pendant of turquoise and pearls

Front



Reverse





TEMPLE JEWELLERY

"Whatever is best and most valued in this world, and that which is most dear to you, should be offered to me, and it will be received back in immense and endless quantity."

Krishna in the Bhagavat Purana

These words of Lord Krishna are devoutly believed by Hindus throughout India to this day; hence the quantity of jewellery presented in the temples is enormous. The image in a consecrated shrine is decorated with its best ornaments on special occasions, such as the birthday of the god, the Hindola Festival, Diwali etc.

Imitation jewellery is absolutely forbidden. Favourite ornaments are such as contain the nine pure gems. The nine precious gems (Navaratna) are as follows: Diamond, Vajra, Hira; Ruby, Manikya, Manik; Cat's eye, Vaiduram, Gomedā; Pearl, Mukta, Moti; Zircon, Gomedā; Coral, Vidruman, Munga; Emerald, Marakatam, Panna; Topaz, Pushparagam, Pukhraj; Sapphire, Nilam, Nilmani.

The daily worship in a Hindu temple consists of sixteen offerings or parts, each accompanied by ceremony. Offering valuable gold ornaments, gems and jewellery is the ninth (Abharanani) of the sixteen offerings (Upachara) which collectively make up the worship or Puja.

Left: Gold tika (worn on forehead)



Minakari and kundan tika with pearls, semi-precious stones and glass beads

Kundan pendant of diamonds and emerald beads





FAMOUS INDIAN PROVERBS

Tum bina baiyar hai aisi, bin pani ke kheti jaisi.
A woman without ornaments is like a field without water.

Sunar apni maan ki nath men se bhi churata hai.
The goldsmith will steal a piece of his own mother's nosering.

Beta jan kar niv chale, sona pahan-kar dhak chale.
Walk humbly after giving birth to a son, and veil yourself when you wear gold. (A warning to proud, vain women.)

Miyan nak katne ko phiren, bivi kahen "nath garha do"
The husband comes to cut off her nose and the wife says, "Buy me a nosering." (A married couple at cross purposes.)

Jangal men moti ki qadr nahin.
Pearls are of no value in a forest.
(This has the same implication as the western proverb, "Don't cast your pearls before swine.")

Bhar hath churi, pat, sun ranr.
Bracelets on her arms, and a widow withal!
(An admonishment to a gay widow.)

Guddar men lal nahin chhipta.
You cannot hide a ruby in a rag. (Truth cannot be hidden.)

Left: Minakari and kundan pendant of semi-precious stones

PEARLS AND BEADS

BY JANE BROWN





Kundan naths (nosering) with Basra pearls



TIPS FOR BUYERS

"The use of [false jewels] is downright and inexcusable a lie.... you use that which pretends to a worth which it has not; which pretends to have cost, and to be, what it did not, and is not; it is an imposition, a vulgarity, an impertinence, and a sin."

Ruskin (*The Lamp of Truth*)

Old, solid gold ornaments are sometimes filled with shellac. It is important to determine this in order to not be overcharged.

To identify imperfections in a diamond, look for tiny rents or fissures and specks. If the diamond has any of these, it is flawed. Note also that a real diamond can never have scratches on its surface; if it does, it is not a diamond.

The value of an emerald depends not so much on its freedom from flaws as the thickness of the stone, its depth and brilliance of colour.

The value of a sapphire is not dependent on size but colour, purity and symmetry. A good sapphire will appear blue both by day and by night.

The value of pearls depends on their size, texture, form, water and lustre. Coloured pearls are lighter in weight and more brittle than real pearls.

Left: Kundan sarpech (worn by men on turbans) of diamonds and emeralds

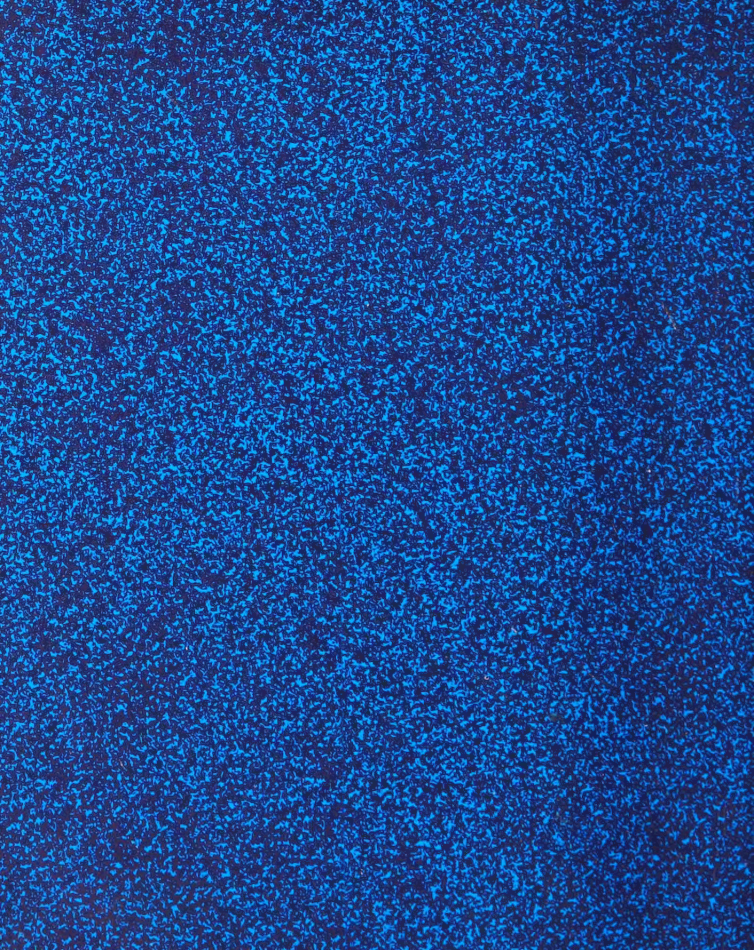
Genuine kundan-set crystal has a mellow, opaque appearance. Artificial kundan is transparent and it glitters. This is due to the fact that glass has been used instead of crystal and coloured tin foil under the stones to create the illusion of colour.

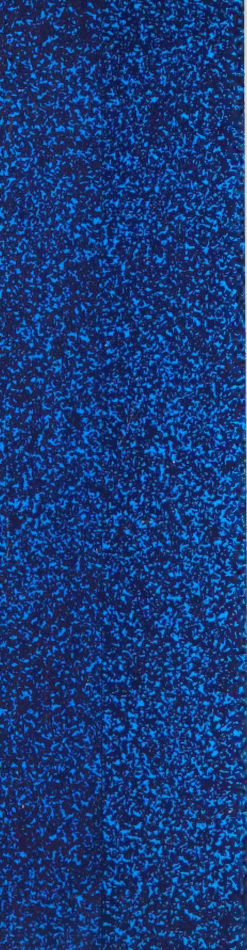
The finest minakari is done on pure gold which lends itself well to intricate designing. On carat gold the colours will never be as brilliant and the outlines of the design will be blurred.

In estimating the amount of gold used in a minakari piece, the shellac inside must be examined. If it is reddish-brown, the gold content will be higher. If it is blackish, it will be less. If going by the age of the piece and not the shellac, the general rule is that the gold in an old piece would be 5/8ths of the total weight of the piece; in a newer piece it would be less and in a very recent piece it may be as low as 1/4th of the total weight.

In trying to differentiate between an old and a new minakari piece, remember that the older the piece, the more intricate the design and more brilliant the colour. 17th century pieces are the finest. 18th century pieces are excellent too, with the difference apparent only to a connoisseur. In the newer pieces the difference is marked.

New cord in an old piece should not make the buyer suspicious. It could have been replaced to hold the ornament together.





Classic India Series

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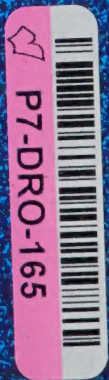
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Jaipur

Jewellery

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