



RESEARCH PAPER

Jewellery of the Indian Subcontinent: A Significant Cultural Element

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: February 24, 2022 Accepted: June 19, 2022 Online: June 21, 2022 Keywords: Cultural, Indian, Jewellery, Mughals, Rajputs Sikhs *Corresponding Author: masooma.abbas @lcwu.edu.pk	Jewellery of the Indian Subcontinent is one the major components of its material culture. The research aims at exploring and aesthetically appreciating the diverse range of Indian jewellery which developed without any discrimination of age, race, gender, or ethnicity. Limited data is available on Indian art of jewellery making with regards to its types, designs, and symbolism. However, this research focuses on Indian jewellery's unique features in which some extinct techniques due to emerging technological advancements are also highlighted. The study focuses on traditional jewellery of the Mughals, Rajput, Sikhs, and aristocracy of the Colonial Period that carried cultural and religious significance. The jewellery piece was either to display riches or it symbolized the wearer's personal ideology. This qualitative research traces historical evidences of trade, gift exchanges, and sources of inspirations. Findings revealed through miniatures, photographs, and historical records show that these jewellery pieces varied from exuberant diamonds and rubies to cowrie shells and glass enamel fillings that were mostly elements of vanity, flamboyance, and ostentation.

Introduction

Indian Subcontinent, over the period of many centuries developed its unique heritage of jewellery which is still retained by its people after the Partition of 1947. Indian jewellery was not just for feminine usage, men also revelled in it, decorating their personas, their weapons or their tools of work. Both men and women adorned themselves from head to toe in a wide array of jewellery, which is visually evident from Indian sculptures and paintings from the Classical period onwards. Temple art and sculptures of the Classical period, art of the late Medieval age, and paintings of the early Modern era, all under the influences of various Indian dynasties display an affluence of jewellery. Jewellery acts as a reliable resource of visual information where other physical evidences may be lost or perished. Each region of the Subcontinent had a niche for jewellery in its culture. There are some similarities between the regional jewellery, but some have retained their own stylistic variations or distinctions due to their aesthetic and technical features. The Subcontinent has also been the central hub of precious metals and stones used in jewellery making. Its vast resources have catered to the people of this area as well as the rest of the world. The varying geographical conditions have provided the consumers and patrons with the richest of valuable materials like diamonds, to the humblest, but no less important materials like cowrie shells and terracotta. The most popular and abundantly used material over the periods is gold favoured by the Hindu dynasties, the Muslim empires, and the Sikh rulers

too. As gold was readily available in this region from its own mines and more via trade, all the people who had access to it, utilized it prominently.

The Hindu religion has great affiliation with jewellery since the very beginning often recorded in the ancient texts and scriptures. Hindu religion had fascination with gold since its origin in ancient beliefs; where the Rig Veda says that the giver of gold receives a life of light and glory (Mathur, 2007). Gold is also associated with prosperity in Hinduism in account of the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi. This association of gold linked to prosperity is carried on by the Muslim rulers as well, where an abundance of gold along with silver and jewels was seen as part of the emperor's treasury. Even Buddhist cave paintings of Ajanta have figures carrying jewellery pieces portraying an ornamental look. Female figures especially painted in the Buddhist Cave XVII, are shown covered in jewellery from head to toe revealing the importance of this art. The female figure has jewellery pieces: *singhār pattī* or *daunī* on her forehead, necklaces of pearls, rubies, and large gemstones *bazūbands* (jewellery piece tied on the upper arm), a waistband and girdle, along with many bangles and bracelets, and small anklets. Even the maidens are covered in jewellery, but less extravagant and of simpler form. The jewellery making tradition has been prevalent in all major Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist dynasties, but the Mughal and Sikh rule has had a greater influence than any other on the jewellery in Punjab and the regions in proximity to it.

Literature Review

Literature concerning jewelry and especially traditional jewelry in the South Asian region is limited. We find that scholars and writers have shown interest in writing about Indian jewelry, but less attention has been given to the jewelry of the Indian Subcontinent. The rich heritage of this area is worth delving into, and thus providing us with an idea of what the age-old look of this region's culture would have been centuries ago. "Long before India was known to the Western world in connection with important sculpture, painting and architecture, it was the legendary land of gems and jewels. Southern India yielded vast store of gold, ruby and emerald mines were accessible, pearls of great beauty were found in the Indian Ocean and the finest rubies, sapphires and cat's-eyes came from Ceylon. These are the materials most often used for Indian jewelry, silver and base metal being less favored (M.L.F., 1927)."

This region has seen the rule of many rulers, with whom the traditional heritage and culture bloomed. Each added their own traditions to the land and incorporated their lifestyles into the society. For instance, the technique of *meenākārī* (enameling) which was done by Sassanid craftsmen, eventually found its way to India through the conquests of the Mughals (Mir Razavi, 2015). It was in India, particularly among the Mughal and Rajputana rule, that it flourished and found its liking as one of the finest crafts in the region. Many of the pieces worn by the emperors included the work of *meenākārī* which was combined with *Kundan* (inlay of stone in gold), which they wore in numerous styles to adorn themselves.

This research, while adding to the limited scholarship on this genre, focuses on the rich heritage of these rulers, and how jewelry was a significant part of their heritage (Mathur, 2007). The research explores the types and style of jewelry, which was prevalent in the region of Punjab, thus adding to the literature on indigenous jewelry too.

Material and Methods

The research has been conducted with qualitative method while employing the APA style of citation. Data has been gathered from books, articles, online resources and by visiting artisans to understand the jewellery techniques of Punjab. Historical research

enabled the researchers to trace the evolution and development of jewellery making, its motifs, and influences in the Indian Subcontinent.

Results and Discussion

The qualitative research work encompasses advents in a historical framework while analysing inspirations that stimulated advancement in jewellery making. On site observations of jewellery techniques were helpful in comprehending the stylistic development under various rulers of the Indian Subcontinent. An overview of the material objects of adornment within the Subcontinent will add to the existing limited scholarship of Indian Jewellery.

Though long before the Mughals, this region had an ever-present jewellery tradition, but yet the Mughals set a significant benchmark in the jewellers' art. They brought stylistic variation and elegance to the jewellery. During the reign of the Mughals, especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the craftsmen reached greater heights of craftsmanship. They gained the prudence and understanding of the existing and emerging styles of the Indian Subcontinent. Under the umbrella of the Mughal emperors the artisans and craftsmen engaged their artistic attention towards refining their skills. The craftsmen of India who had a clear understanding of their long prevalent traditions, now set out to refine themselves and in doing so they redefined the parameters of good craftsmanship. The immigrant artisans and craftsmen, who came along with the Mughals to the new land, must have been enchanted by this region in its entirety. The colour pallets, motifs, and lavish display of jewellery were well adopted by them.

India had long been known for being an inexhaustible source of diamonds, as well as various precious gemstones, which the people of this area used sparingly in their jewellery. Gemstones held great importance for the people of this land like the nine stones of the *nauratnā* that were popularly worn by the Hindus in the form of a necklace. For the Hindus gemstones had a special place in their culture, as the gemstones were attributed various qualities, both spiritual and cosmic. When the Mughals came to this region they also got influenced by these superstitious beliefs. They also started wearing the *nauratnā* in the form of necklaces, armllets, and rings. The talismanic effect of the *nauratnā* stones made the *nauratnā* jewellery a popular item among the Mughals. In the talismanic context, the setting of the *nauratnā* was very important and was determined by certain rules known to the astrologer and the jeweller. Patterns were designed according to the cardinal points, with individual variations determined by the horoscope (Devi and Varadarajan, 2008). This practice is still done in modern day India.

Jewellery was not only important as a religious or secular item; it was also a form of wealth. People in general and especially rulers used to keep jewellery and precious stones as a safe keep which may be used as a mode of currency in a time of need. Thus, at times large gemstones were kept un-cut or in a larger form. It is not unusual to have found large and rare diamonds in India which came from various sources like Golconda and the mines of Deccan. Golconda presents us with rare examples of purity and clarity in the form of India's ever so famous diamonds, the *Koh-i-noor*; the Mountain of Light, and the *Darya-e-noor*; the Sea of Light. These two after being fought over many a times, finally left the country; the *Koh-i-noor* is now part of the British Crown jewels, whereas the rare pink *Darya-e-noor* was looted by Nadir Shah of Persia during his invasion of Delhi.

Some of the Mughal emperors appreciated and promoted the jeweller's art more than others. During the reign of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, artisans and jewellers from all around, from foreign and local lands, came to Delhi to display their talents to a wealthy and flourishing court eager for their products (M.L.F., 1927). The emperors were fond of jewellery in every form. They not only adorned themselves with jewellery, they

decorated items of everyday use and bibelots as well. Surfaces were inlaid with gold and precious stones set in rich patterns. One can even find fine surface embellishment and ornamentation of dagger hilts, huqqa bases, and wine cups etc.

The Mughal emperors' flair for jewels and the aesthetic pleasure they took in them was especially evident on occasions of the State. All the emperors except for Aurangzeb used to adorn themselves with a variety of jewellery on important occasions (Chopra, 1976). The emperor was indeed meant to be better fashioned than the public, but the Mughal emperors were really particular about this. Not just their clothes, even their shoes and headdresses used to be lavishly embroidered with gold wire and stones. Accounts of their splendour can be found in the writings of famous writers like Monserrate and Roe. They like many other missionaries, travellers, and traders came to this new land of the east that was an attraction to the world. These foreigners used to stay in India from months to years, sometimes as guests of the court and at times even as employees (Chopra, 1976).

Father Antonio Monserrate was a Spanish missionary to the court of Akbar. During his stay in India, he keenly observed and wrote about the emperor, his court, and his lifestyle. In one of his writings Monserrate describes the attire of Akbar,

"His Majesty wore clothes of silk beautifully embroidered in gold. His Majesty's cloak comes down to his hose, and boots cover his ankles completely and (he) wears pearls and gold jewellery (Chopra, 1976)."

The variety of jewels that an emperor incorporated in his apparel and accessories was very impressive. Sir Thomas Roe, an ambassador at the court at Agra, creates a clear picture of this through his description of Jahangir's ensemble on the Emperor's birthday,

"His turban was plumed with heron's feathers; on one side was a ruby as big as a walnut; on the other side was a large diamond; in the centre was a large emerald, shaped like a heart. His sash was wreathed with a chain of pearls, rubies, and diamonds. His neck-chain consisted of three double strings of pearls. He wore armlets set with diamonds on his elbows; he had three rows of diamonds on his wrists; he had rings on nearly every finger (M.L.F., 1927)."

Sir Thomas Roe goes on to describe that Jahangir's coat was made of cloth of gold and on his feet the emperor wore buskins embroidered with pearls.

The Mughals' possession of rare and valuable jewellery is commendable. They used to exchange valuables like jewellery and gemstones as gifts. They gave as well as received jewellery as gifts. Popular jewellery items like the bejewelled *sarpesh* (turban ornament) that was a highly esteemed and important piece of turban jewellery was gifted to high nobles as per the will of the emperor. Jahangir is known to have given rubies worth of thousands of rupees to his sons Parvaiz and Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan was also very generous in giving away notable gifts in the form of jewellery. He once gave his personal pearl necklace worth 1.4 million to his son Dara Shikoh (Mukhia, 2009).

To the Mughals jewellery and gemstones were important and essential objects of beauty and they loved to collect the finest of these. They promoted the jewellers' craft and had a keen interest in adapting indigenous techniques of jewellery making. The Subcontinent long had a tradition of jewellery usage in its culture and the Mughal Empire added to that. It was not uncommon to have jewellery makers working on jewellery of all sorts of materials for a variety of customers. They could be seen making jewellery ranging from gold to brass, as per the pocket of the customer. Akbar took this practice forward by establishing workshops (*kārkhānās*) at Fatehpur Sikri that catered to various disciplines of the jeweller's art. These *kārkhānās* not only catered to jewellery making but Akbar also

assigned four of his officials for buying and selling of gemstones. These four officials are named in the *Ain-e-Akbari* as Itimad Khan Gujrati, Baqi Khan, Jagmal, and Hakim Ain ul-Mulk (Mathur, 2007). Proceeding emperors after Akbar also kept the interest in gemstones and fine jewellery from these gemstones intact. According to Edward Terry, the Chaplain to Sir Thomas Roe, Jahangir was, “the greatest and richest master of precious stones that inhabits the whole earth (Mathur, 2007).”

Though Jahangir is appraised as the master of precious stones, it was his son Shah Jahan who was a connoisseur of gemstones. Gemstones appealed to him and he liked to appraise, collect, and wear them in the form of jewellery. His fascination of jewels can be seen in most of his portraits where he is seen holding a gemstone, either reviewing or appraising it. One such portrait of him, shows the Emperor assessing the quality of gemstones



Figure 1. *Shah Jahan as the Connoisseur of Jewels*, 1620, Watercolour on gold paper, 38.9x26.2cm, 15 ¼ x10 ⅜ in., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. From (Source: Dehejia, 1998).

Shah Jahan sits on the throne with his son Dara Shikoh sitting by his knee. The Emperor is holding a plate in his left hand that contains colourful gemstones. In his right hand he holds up a red-coloured jewel to access. On the thumb of this hand Shah Jahan wears an archer's ring which was a prized and personalized jewellery piece of a king in India. Both the figures in the painting can be seen wearing jewellery made of pearls and coloured stones, seemingly rubies and emeralds. The Emperor's neck is strung with two necklaces and a long *mālā* or string of pearls. He wears pearl earrings in the form of a *bālī* of gold wire strung with a large pearl. On his wrists are pearl bracelets with a large ruby in the centre which matches the ruby pendant of one of the necklaces. The headdress is decorated with a *kalghī* (plume) that is weighed down by gemstones.

Shah Jahan used to wear jewellery in the form of turban ornaments, necklaces, earrings, armlets, bracelets, pendants, and rings and also had the predilection to visually record his jewellery items. Two pendants are seen in figures 1.2 and 1.3, one with inlaid gold inscriptions and the other with a carved cameo portrait of the emperor.



Figure 2. Pendant made for Emperor Shah Jahan, 1637-8, Jade; 4.5x 3.8cm, 1 ¾ x 1 ½ in., Kuwait National Museum. (Source: Dehejia, 1998).



Figure 3. Cameo portrait of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, 1660, Sardonyx, rubies and silver mount; diameter 3.2cm, 1¼ in., Kuwait National Museum. (Source: Dehejia, 1998).

All Mughal emperors were fond of wearing jewellery and they are seen adorned with a significant amount of jewellery in their portraits and court paintings. In *Portrait of Shah Jahan as a Prince* of 1616-17 the young Emperor stands against a dark green garden filled with flowering plants, holding a turban ornament in his fingers (figure 1.4). He is decked up in jewellery of sorts ranging from turban ornaments studded with large gemstones to delicate gold bracelets, earrings, and rings.

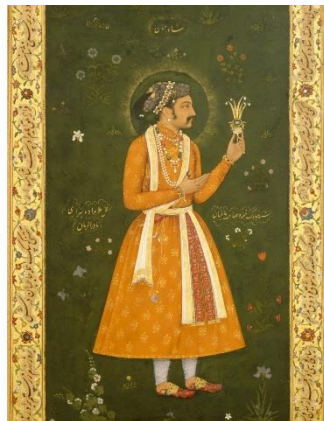


Figure 4. Abu'l Hasan (Nadir-uz Zaman), *Portrait of Shah Jahan as a Prince*, 1616-17, Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. (Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, "Shah Jahan," <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O16761/painting-shah-jahan/>)

Like the Mughal men, the women were also keen to ornament themselves with jewellery. The women were used to wearing jewellery from their very childhood. This practice is an important cultural aspect of the Indian Subcontinent. Children from a very early age were accustomed to wearing jewellery, whether it was an amulet, ring, or earring. They wore some sort of jewellery that was relevant to their religion or the traditions of their region. The Mughals who were accustomed to Iranian and Central Asian trends of jewellery swiftly adapted Indian traditions of jewellery wearing. The female child used to have their ears and noses pierced at a very young age and they started wearing smaller items of jewellery made of gold, silver or even brass as per their means allowed. This shows that though not everyone was able to wear precious jewellery, people in general were ardently involved in wearing jewellery. It may have been an intentional choice at times but more often it was a norm for them, a tradition that had long been part of the culture.

As the girls grew older, they started wearing more jewellery, especially heavier jewellery. Women used to be bedecked with a variety of jewellery on every part of their body. In the *Ain-e-Akbari*, Abu Fazl has listed thirty-seven types of ornaments. From head ornament to foot ornaments, the Mughal women indulged in all. They used to wear head ornaments like *jhumar*, *chak*, and *māng*; ear ornaments like *karnāphūl*, *mor bhanwar*, *bālī* and *champākālī*; nose ornaments like *nath*, *laung* and *besar*; neck ornaments like *hār* and *gulūband*; arm ornaments like *bazūband*; wrist ornaments like *gajrā*, *kangan* and *chūrī*; hand ornaments like rings, *haathphūl* and *ārsī*; waist ornaments like *chhudr khāntika* and *katī mekhālā*; feet ornaments like toe rings; and ankle ornaments like *pāyal* (Chopra, 1976). Similarly, the princesses and queens wherever depicted in Mughal miniatures are seen with heavy jewellery from head to toe encrusted with precious stones. It reveals the royal culture of taking pleasure in adorning oneself with traditional indigenous jewellery like large crown ornament set with pearl strings and emerald *jighan*, *mālā hār*, *pauntā*, and *jhumkās* (large bell-shaped earrings). The last of the Mughal emperors was Bahadur Shah Zafar. In a painting from Delhi, India, he can be seen sitting holding a *huqqā* pipe in one hand with a landscape and river behind him



Figure 5. *Portrait of Bahadur Shah Zafar*, 1850, Watercolour on ivory, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. (Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, “Bahadur Shah II,” <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O20380/bahadur-shah-ii-r-1837-painting-unknown/>,



Figure 6. *Portrait of Bahadur Shah Zafar*, 1854. Source: Wikipedia, “Bahadur Shah II,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bahadur_Shah_II.jpg,

In the painting the emperor is wearing jewellery of pearls and emeralds in the form of a *sarpesh*, multiple necklaces of varying lengths, and a tassel attached to the turban. In another painting the Emperor sits on his knee in the interior of a building in a royal attire lavishly embroidered. On his head is a *sarpesh* attached to a *sarpattī*. Necklaces of large pearls are worn on his neck. The pearls have intervals of emeralds in between and large central pendants of rubies. Each visible body part of the Emperor painted by the artist is carrying heavy jewellery pieces such that the Emperor's wrists too have heavy bracelets.

The advent of the Mughals into the Subcontinent by Babar was also the time when the religion of Sikhism saw its evolution. It existed alongside Hinduism and Islam for a long time. Emperors like Akbar who supported religious freedom had a favourable outlook towards the religion, and thus the Sikh gurus and the Mughal Empire had a positive relationship. However, the mutual correlation of the Mughals and Sikhism did not last long. The successors of Akbar retaliated towards the Sikh gurus and many wars were fought. These turbulent times continued up till the death of Aurangzeb. The downfall of the Mughal Empire was an up rise for the Sikhs. It was the beginning of the Sikh empire, 1799 to 1849, which was based in the Punjab region (*Maps of India, "Sikh Empire"*). The Sikh empire was founded under the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who was known as *Sher-e-Punjab* (Lion of Punjab). He was one of the most powerful rulers of the Empire. The Empire under the rule of Ranjit Singh and his atelier expanded to vast regions of the Subcontinent during the nineteenth century. During its peak time the Empire extended to the Khyber Pass in the west, to Tibet in the east, to Kashmir in the north, and to Sindh in the south (*Maps of India, 2019*).

The court of Ranjit Singh was one of the most magnificent courts in the Subcontinent. Through his victories Ranjit Singh established a wealth of jewels and relics. His fabulous collection was the envy of his contemporaries and also astonishing for the British officials of the East India Company. An account by Sir Henry Edward Fane (an ADC posted in Ludhiana) describes the magnificent collection of the Maharaja:

"The dresses and jewels of the Raja's court were the most superb that can be conceived; the whole scene can only be compared to a gala night at the Opera. The minister's son, in particular, the reigning favourite of the day (Hira Singh) was literally one mass of jewels; his neck, arms and legs were covered with necklaces, armlets and bangles, forms of pearls, diamonds and rubies, one above the another, so thick that it was difficult to discover anything beneath them" (Fane, 1842, p. 134).

The Maharaja used to bestow upon his guest fabulous gifts, especially to the foreign visitors or dignitaries. Misr Beli Ram, the employee of the Maharaja's *Toshākhanā* accounted that Mac Naughten the senior most officer accompanying the Governor General was given numerous valuable gifts by the Maharaja. These gifts included, "fifteen garments, a pearl necklace a jewelled armlet and a pair of gold bangles, an elephant with silver saddle and a jewelled sword" (Singh, 2001, para. 3).

Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not indulge in flaunting luxurious attires. He dressed simplistically, though owning the most valuable and fabulous jewels, like the ever so famous diamond, *Koh-i-noor*. In a portrait Maharaja Ranjit Singh is sitting adorned in jewels, which is very unusual from his general simplistic nature



Figure 7. *Portrait of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, reproduction from portrait painted by Jiwan Ram at Rupar. (Source: Hendley, 1909).

It was on rare occasions that the Maharaja would dress so elaborately, but on this occasion, he dressed up with some very fine jewels. This is a reproduction of an original portrait. The original portrait was painted by Jiwan Ram an artist from Delhi who accompanied the Governor General, Lord William Bentinck, who interviewed the Maharaja at Rupar, on the Sutlej (Losty, 2015). The Maharaja is wearing pearl string in his neck and attached to his clothing. Pearls can be seen as a prominent material for a jewellery piece in the portraits of Ranjit Singh. Another item commonly seen in his portraits are large *balay* (earrings), which were traditionally worn by Sikhs, Khatri and Dogras (Kaur, 2011). In most of Ranjit Singh's portraits he is wearing a bejewelled turban with a heavily embroidered attire. He can be seen wearing many types of jewellery pieces that accompany the attire that include *bazūbands*, *sarpesh*, pearl strings, bracelets, and rings with precious stones



Figure 8. Kehar Singh, *Portrait of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, 1849, Gouache on glass, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. (Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, "Maharaja Ranjit Singh," <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O248462/portrait-of-maharajra-ranjit-singh-painting-kehar-singh/>, accessed October 15, 2012).

The lavishness of the Sikh court can be seen in a portrait of Maharaja Kharak Singh, the second Maharaja of Lahore who was the son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In a portrait of 1840, Kharak Singh is sitting on a gold chair set with jewels



Figure 9. *Portrait of Maharaja Kharak Singh*, 1840, Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. (Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, "Kharak Singh," <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O70536/kharak-singh-second-maharaja-of-painting-unknown/>)

The Maharaja's green coat is speckled with gold and he is wearing gold and pearl jewellery. Most prominent of the jewellery items worn by Kharak Singh in this portrait are very large *bālay* that are pierced into his ears. Commonly large *balay* were worn in single pairs by Sikh or Punjabi men but here the Maharaja is wearing three pairs. The *bālay* are of different sizes. The one in the earlobe is the largest, with the size decreasing towards the last one pierced into the upper cartilage of the ear. The *bālay* are all strewn with two pearls with a ruby between them. The largest of the *bālay* has a tear drop emerald hanging from it. Under the Sikh rule some regions of the Subcontinent were more affected by the style of the Sikhs than others. From the various regions, Punjab being the most important region of the Sikh rule, holds a significant jewellery style of its own.

The Maharajas of the Patiala family, especially Maharaja Bhupinder Singh was famously known to indulge in luxury jewellery. For this he used to seek after foreign brands or jewellery companies like Cartier and DeBeers. In a portrait of his Maharaja Bhupinder Singh is wearing a *sarpesh* of diamonds and emeralds made by Cartier, Paris.



Figure 10. *Maharaja Bhupinder Singh*, 1911, Photograph. (Source: Maharaja Jewelry, "Maharaja Bhupinder Singh," <http://www.shahjewelry.com/gallery/index.html#30>,

Along with the magnificent *sarpesh* he is wearing numerous pearls on his turban as well as fourteen *mālās* of large sized pearls



Figure 11. *Sarpesh of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh by Cartier*, Photograph. (Source: The Sikh Foundation, "Sarpesh of Bhupinder Singh," <http://www.sikhfoundation.org>, accessed October 16, 2012).



Figure 12. *Maharaja Yadavinder Singh*, 1941, Photograph. (Source: Maharaja Jewelry, "Maharaja Yadavinder Singh," <http://www.shahjewelry.com/gallery/index.html#1>,

From the Patiala lineage Maharaja Yadavinder Singh also wore the famous Patiala necklace by Cartier, Paris (figures 12 and 13).

Sikh rulers with their traditional lavish attires and turbans could be spotted ruling the lush mountainous areas of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Out of the many rulers in Jammu and Kashmir, a name that comes forward is that of Maharaja Gulab Singh who was the founder and first Maharaja of this state (Singh, 2012). In one of his paintings by William Carpenter in Kashmir, who painted several other paintings under Gulab Singh's patronship, the Maharaja sits cross-legged on a carpet with his grandson and an attendant



Figure 13. *The Patiala Necklace*, Photograph. (Source: The Sikh Foundation, “The Patiala Necklace,” <http://www.sikhfoundation.org/2012/sikh-arts-heritage/visiting-the-maharaja/>,



Figure 14. William Carpenter, *Maharaja Gulab Singh*, 1855, Watercolour on paper, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. (Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, “Gulab Singh,” <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O70041/painting-carpenter-william/>,

Both the Maharaja and his little grandson are wearing a significant amount of gold jewellery in the form of long *mālās* and *kārhās* (heavy bangles). Gulab Singh is shown wearing an unusual *sarpesh* with a double *jighan*. The state of Jammu and Kashmir progressed under the rule of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, son of Maharaja Gulab Singh. In a photograph of his, Maharaja Ranbir Singh poses for the camera decked in splendid ornaments



Figure 15. *Portrait Maharaja Ranbir Singh*, Photograph. (Source: Bonhams, "Ranbir Singh," <http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/20048/lot/2068/>, accessed October 15, 2012).

His turban is decorated with thick bunches of pearl strings accompanied with an extremely large *sarpesh*. On his neck are multiple pearl *malas* and a *kainthā* closely wrapped around the neck. Other pieces include a floral shoulder ornament and stone studded *karhās*. The various portraits of Ranbir Singh show the Maharaja wearing close fitting collar necklaces, similar to a female's *gulūband*, made of round pearls and large tear drop emeralds with stone encrusted flower shaped pendant and huge-sized precious stones usually emeralds dangling from the pendant matching the earrings. Like other Maharajas, he too was obsessed with heavy gold jewellery like *bazūbands*, choker style necklace of pearls with intervals of tear drop emeralds large and small.

After the Mughals, in align with the Sikh Imperial traditions, Maharajas of the nineteenth century in central India also had great predilection for display of splendour through their attire and accessories. Such was the Maharaja of Rewa, Raghuraj Singh who sits in a picture bejewelled with numerous ornaments, including multiple necklaces, bangles and rings



Figure 16. *Maharaja Raghuraj Singh of Rewa*. (Source: Rare and Vintage Images, "Images of Indian King", <http://rareandvintageimage.blogspot.com/2012/05/images-of-indian-king.html>,



Figure 17. *Rajpat* Crown. (Source: Hendley, 1909).

The Maharaja's most significant ornament is a *Rajpāt* (crown) which is made of gold and set with desirable gemstones (figure 17). The front of the crown has multiple leaflets of diamonds that form an ornament similar to the *kalghī* and the *krit*. According to Hendley, these diamond leaflets have "emerald pendants hanging from it and a central large ruby. In the plaque below the *krit* is a large sapphire cut in the form of *Chaturbhuj*; the four-armed Vishnu (Hendley, 1906)." The top edge of the crown is decorated with diamonds forming seven *chānd* (crescent) inside the circles. The *chānd* is a popular motif in Punjabi jewellery which can be seen in many ornaments of women as well. The bottom rim of the crown dangles with large rough oval shaped pearls.

Conclusion

The various examples discussed have been given to illustrate the importance of jewellery, a significant part of attire and a reflection of affluence. From the Mughals to the Sikhs and Rajputs of the Indian Subcontinent jewellery has been a permanent material object of desire and aesthetic pleasure. Not only the ruling class but it also affected the taste of the aristocracy who pursued the fashion admired by the emperors. India has a rich and vast heritage of jewellery making techniques along with abundance of precious and semi-precious stones. The study can further be expanded by gemmologists too which will open further avenues of stories behind the selection of stones for personal items. The legacy of Indian jewellery has passed one from one generation to the other. Hence transmitting the original traditional techniques of jewellery making even today.

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