

Of gold, pearls & DIAMONDS

Katai Kaj and Bangla Kaj

Mithu, an artisan jeweller, from Tanti Bazaar informs Star Lifestyle that 'Katai Kaj' was quite popular in the past when the 'deshis' were more inclined towards solid gold and intricate filigree designs; somehow over the years, trends changed, financial stability declined and people were more interested in what Mithu recalls as 'Bangla Kaj' with fillers and attachment to inexpensive jewellery as alternates.

However, according to the master craftsman, the dying trend has revived again, as customers are getting more interested in elaborate wedding jewellery and considering gold as a valuable asset worth collecting over the long run.

Ripon, the proprietor of Payel Jewellery in Gulshan, shares a similar experience, "Our jewellers are extremely talented. With razor-sharp gold and silver strings, less than a single strand of hair's width; they are able to produce elaborate designs on solid gold (katai kaj) that are so fine, that it only reapproves our mastery over the craft." Recollecting the legends of Bengal, he states "A large part of our heritage belongs to the craftsmanship of our predecessors; whether in fabric designs or jewellery manufacture, we cannot deny our flair."



Much more than an asset

For centuries gold has been an inevitable part of our lives. If anyone denotes that gold is only for women; they truly do not have any knowledge about the lavish lives of the Nawabs and Zamindars of Bengal.

'Shonar Chamuch Mukhe Niye Jonmo' is a common term used in the Bengali language describing the lives of children born in well-off families; this tradition of feeding the young with a golden spoon is still practiced in many families in the country. Additionally, to mark any occasion as special, tokens are given in gold, for e.g. during the 'Mukh Dekha' ceremony at Bengali weddings; the conferring of gold translates to approval.



Gold as an asset

All over the world, gold is regarded as an asset, maybe more so in our subcontinent. The up-to-date rate of gold price in Bangladesh for (22k) as of the first week of November 2017 is approximately Tk 3113.25 per gram and for (24k) it is Tk 3396.54 per gram.

Nahid Mazumder, an ardent admirer of gold ornaments and someone who married almost a decade ago, states "Thank God, my parents gifted me a lot of gold at my wedding! Gold price has more than doubled in the last 10 years. I love pairing gold with most of my outfits, whether it's a small set or a statement piece. Apart from setting aside few special sets for my children as memorabilia; I interchanged most of the others and got new designs in exchange." She also informs that on an average 20 percent loss is incorporated during an exchange programme, the amount minor, compared to buying a brand-new piece especially in the recent times.

Upon inspection we were notified that most renowned jewellers in town, have already obtained the 'gold-check machine' through which they are able to assess the gold quality and denominate the karat and weight almost immediately, therefore reducing any sort of deception during sale and purchase.



If we rummage through pages of history would be able to get numerous accounts where the affinity towards gold is highlighted over and over again.

Queen Elizabeth I's envoy to Bengal, Ralph Fitch, having witnessed the ladies at Sonargaon, the past-capital of the region, was completely taken aback by the countless jewellery pieces with which they adorned themselves from top-to-toe.

From this narrative and the illustrious history of the subcontinent, we can surely reckon that the past was surely glorified for 'Dacca' and an envy for the rest of the world.

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