

Several jewellery stores in Chandni Chawk such as New Utshab Jewellers and Gohona are open to any kind of custom orders.

For several decades, gold jewellery has remained the revered czar of the jewellery scene in Bangladesh. Starting from the proposal token, to the ring and the final wedding ornaments, gold has been the preferred pick for almost all social classes. But just as times have changed, people's choices have evolved and recently, there has been a visible emergence of silver jewellery in weddings again.

While gold ornaments have their exceptionality, silver jewellery is just as timeless and has existed for the same span of time. In fact, no valuable element can be compared to the sheer sophistication that bespoke silver bijouterie bears.

But is there truly a possibility of breaking out of the 'golden' age?

SILVERSMITHS AND JEWELLERY CRAFT

In the past, jewellery-making used to be a family occupation in this region. Smiths who lived in the rural areas then were inspired by the everyday elements surrounding them – flowers, leaves, birds, fish, the sun, moon and stars — and would lay out the groundwork for their designs based on these vivid shapes. In those days, perfecting the silver 'filigree' and 'lak' were two of the most remarkable achievements in the smith community. 'Filigree' is a kind of delicate jewellery metalwork, usually of both gold and silver, made with tiny beads or twisted threads. On the other hand, 'lak' is resin-filled gold or silver bangles/earrings made from paper-thin sheets of the metal.

Today's silver artisans are even more adept and adapting fast to the constantly changing tastes and shopping patterns of 21st century consumers. The largest crafting hub of silver jewellery and artisans is located at Bhakurta village, Savar. While passing the area, you will easily spot several small shop/manufacturing units lined together where men, women, young and old are engrossed in their own craftwork. In fact, Bhakurta has earned a name nationwide for its substantial work in the jewellery smithy field.

Highlighting the differences in silver ornaments, a shopkeeper at one of Dhaka's lesser known jewellery shops mentioned that there are actually two kinds of silver jewellery.

The first is made of pure silver metal. In its purest form, it is malleable and hence, has full resale, refurbish and exchange values.

In contrast, the other kind is made as silver combined with a few other elements. Thus, although it is more durable and looks equally attractive, it cannot be changed or redesigned like pure silver sets. Only the stones or colour of the sets can be altered. Moreover, although the process of making

the two kinds of ornaments is more or less the same, different kinds of artisans are required for each making task.

Besides Bhakurta, there are several other places around the city like BDR gate, Keraniganj and Hajaribagh Park slope where silversmiths can be seen engaged in their work in various crafting and manufacturing units. The artisans at these smaller units usually complete the urgent orders.

ALL THINGS SILVER

In the eyes of the right beholder, all kinds of silver jewellery has had a unique aesthetic element that is unmatched by any other expensive metals or jewels. They are affordable, redesignable and long lasting. And today, silver is making a comeback as the 21st century bride's first choice of embellishment.

Some specific traditional wedding ornaments are already quite the mainstream

favourites. The chandra haar, for instance, is a classic ornamental piece worn around the neck that is often passed down as an heirloom in affluent families. There are various other popular styles and types of silver ornaments such as tikli (worn on the head), side pasha or jhumar (worn on one side of the head), nath (worn on the nose), kaan pasha (earring), mantasha and kada/kara (thick bangles worn around the wrist), kamarbandh or bichcha (worn around the waist), jhumkas (big dangling earrings), anklets and even toe rings.

Silver jewellery is also often plated in gold and looks just as elegant. Besides these, oxidised silver jewellery can also be quite alluring if you can carry it off well.

Nowadays, most people prefer to have their own customised piece of ornament and for that, taking inspiration (in some cases, imitating) from Pinterest or foreign

brides on social media is the common way to go.

Several jewellery stores in Chandni Chawk such as New Utshab Jewellers and Gohona are open to any kind of custom orders. They mentioned that a full pure silver handmade set takes about 4 — 5 days to make while the alloyed one takes 2 days to make. Prices for alloyed sets range between Tk 2,000 and above.

On the contrary, pure silver is sold on per 'bhoori' cost and each bhoori is priced at Tk 1,050. In addition to this, Joypuri designs and stone studded silver jewellery are apparently the current favourites.

If you are up for it, then finding the most perfect silver jewellery can take you on an intriguing adventure through the lanes of Chandni Chawk or New Market. However, if you want to opt for brand names you can drop by Aarong or Aranya; both have some incredible and dazzling collections.

SPORTING SILVER RIGHT

Silver jewellery has the capability to make even the blandest and most basic outfits stand out. But sometimes, setting up the best match between outfit and accessory is a Herculean task. To begin with, silver usually goes hand in hand with deep sultry coloured outfits. Just sit back for a second and imagine yourself (or the beloved bride-to-be) adorned in a midnight blue lehenga/sari paired with stunning silver jewellery from head to toe — it feels like a scene out of a dream wedding, does it not?

Black, deep maroon, burgundy, teal blue and warm purple are other shades on which silver would totally pop. While sporting it right is important, maintaining your precious belongings well is also necessary. No matter how great it looks, silver ornaments do tend to tarnish on the surface, especially if they are not worn enough. However, the smart thing to do is not to let the tarnish build and polish it up with silver cleaner to retain its brilliance.

YOUR WEDDING YOUR CHOICE

For many centuries, silver has been a prized metal for crafting many kinds of jewellery and other items. It is renowned for its lustrous finish and versatile applications. Referring to the proverbial silver spoon, it has also been revered as a symbol of wealth and social status.

What's more is how silver jewellery instantly updates your look with ease this season and helps you stand out amongst the golden crowd!

At the end of the day, it's your wedding, so you should be the one making the final call. Whether you choose gold or silver, what matters more is that it makes you happy and makes your special day even more special.

But if you are truly impressed by the brilliance of silver, and if it's too late to invest on it, here's an endnote idea.

Instead of gold tokens on proposal, you could suggest presenting silver tokens. Plus, you can get a small but ornate silver jewellery box to bear the treasured engagement rings. In that way, you still get to add a something silver to your special day while staying within your budget constraint.

By Nafisa Faruque

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Models: Indrani and Mysha

Wardrobe design: Jahin Khan

Jewellery: Glued Together

Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha

Make-up and hair: Noyon Ahamed and Niloy

Location: Mermaid Beach Resort

