

## Chapter 7

### SOCIAL VALUE OF GOLD JEWELLERY

#### ***7.1 Introduction***

Value is generally understood as the belief associated with a sense of right and wrong, and, thus, constitutes an integral part of a culture. It is connected in the way of life, attitude, and societal norms of people by transferring from one generation to another through socialization. The value of gold jewellery, as a symbol of religious belief or as an artefact, is ingrained in the cultural heritage of Indian society. The tradition of carrying on the social value of gold jewellery lies in these two major segments—firstly as an artefact—the value of amber jewellery has grown stronger over the years for its economic value, used as an investment at the time of need; and second as a ‘belief’—it has been a cultural practice to use gold jewellery for ornamentation and as a status symbol. The religious belief associated with metallic gold and gold jewellery is the prime factor for practising the tradition of buying/gifting gold jewellery whenever an occasion demands. The continuation of buying gold jewellery is considered when the next generation takes up the tradition of customary rituals linked with gold jewellery. The patterned behaviour of people buying gold jewellery in Siliguri is undergoing an evolutionary change, and this modification is happening in a multi-dimensional manner where the multitude of culture has created a melting pot of different cultural beliefs allied with gold jewellery. This assimilation of several socio-cultural values associated with gold is transforming the specificity of social value attached with gold jewellery. Moreover, the gold jewellery is considered as an integral part of our life as it is connected with body. Other than the personal adornment, gold too has an underneath mystic meaning connected with sacredness and purity as it acts as an emotional bond between the wearer and the giver.

This chapter deals with the issue of continuity and change in the social value of gold jewellery by taking the perspectives of the Siliguri consumers as well as of the traditional *swarnakars* into account. I have taken a personal history in the form of case studies to understand the consumers’ views on gold jewellery. The social value will be

discussed under the following heads: (1) in terms of religious value, (2) in terms of rational value, (3) in terms of social status and social bond, and (4) in terms of body image and fashion.

### ***7.2 In Terms of Religious Value***

Religion and gold are metaphorically associated with each other from ancient times to the present. The presence of gold in the form of artwork and religious symbol has occupied a central position in the belief system of the people of all religions in the world. The divine power of the metal lies in its deep rich yellow colour that never gets faded even if the metal is exposed to moisture; this has earned it a stature of supreme material to indicate its holiness. The religious value of gold in India is strongly tied with Hinduism where the metal 'gold' symbolizes the Indian Gods and Goddesses. It is a fundamental object that symbolises Hindu God *Agni* and *Kuber*, and Goddess *Lakshmi*, and metaphorically represents the sacredness, purity and immortality that bind religious beliefs and culture together (Nanda 1992:126-127; Jolly 1889; Bhattacharya 1983: 33-38). The Hindu mythologies transcend down to the common people, who in turn, add sacredness to gold and gold ornaments.

One of my respondents, Mrs. S Das, aged 45, said that according to Vedic belief, gold is associated with the immortality for its sacred nature, and she believes that it interconnects with Hindu God *Brahma*, who is also known as *Hiranyagarbha* (Menon 2015:15; Nanda 1992:116) which signifies 'born of gold' as he is born from the cosmic egg of gold and is the source formation of Universe. It is also believed that gold is the seed of God *Agni*, the fire god. Therefore, the idea of gold being born from a fire will transform everything into purity.

As "fire was thought to be the strongest repeller of demons" (Leslie 1992:98), gold being a symbol of fire is used right from the birth to marriage and in every ritual in Hindu tradition and culture. According to Rajni Nanda, the intricate use of gold and gold jewellery prevailed in Indian society and culture since the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. It was the time when metal gold was first put into a form of art to make ornaments. People used to create objects made up of gold, as it is the most reliable metal, which did not change its chemical state with changing seasons. The richness of

gold and gold jewellery is also mentioned in Indian Vedic texts such as *Taittiriya Samhita*, *Vajasaneji Samhita*, *Aitareya Brahmnana*, *Satapatha Brahmana*, *Jaiminiya Brahmana*, *Chandogya Upanisad*, *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* and *Smrtis* which is why gold was used for making pieces of jewellery, clothes, chariots, medicines, utensils, musical instruments etc, since the Vedic times. Moreover, this made Vedic society rich in terms of the aesthetic and social value of gold. The possession of gold in form of jewellery for personal adornment is also mentioned in these Vedic texts and Indian mythology. We also find the mention of gold jewellery for ornamentation and its close association with religious belief in Indian epics. In Mahabharata, gold jewellery was gaged as ‘sacred object’ and as an ‘eternal cleanser’/ ‘*sudhhi*’ (Nanda 1992:142,145). It was believed that giving of gold to someone indicates giving all good blessing to the person. For these reason gifting of gold is an auspicious duty for Hindus. In Mahabharata and Ramayana, it is observed that all the characters in the epics had adorned their body with specific gold jewellery. Each style and pattern of design symbolizes the character of the person (both male and female) who wears the jewellery. From the point of view of the artisans jeweller making is an act of highest form of artistry and aesthetics, which has a long tradition and continuity (Nanda 1992:26-79,198-199). As the profession existed from Vedic period so the art of the artisans was more reflected in different kinds, types and styles of jewellery in forms of earrings, chains, necklaces, anklets, waist-chains, *mukuts*, *niskas* etc. (Nanda 1992:152). The artists have moved a long way forward by innovating new designs and styles keeping in pace with changing time and requirements.

Mr. G Ganguli, a *karigar*, said that there is a long tradition which is continuing in our culture that the father should serve food (*annaprasan*) to the new-born child to eat from the golden spoon at the time of first rice eating ceremony, or should offer a gift in the form of jewellery made up of gold, such as gold earring/chain/ring to the child (Nanda 1992:138-139; Menon, 2015:16). Gold is needed to perform such sacred ritual in our society but presently a few alterations in practising this ritual have been observed in this contemporary society— firstly, instead of father any other member of a family can perform the ritual, and secondly, it is not possible to own golden spoon because of its high economic value so silver spoon has taken its place. Still, it is believed that for the betterment of the child, gifting of gold jewellery is an unavoidable ritual, as it will protect the child against curse and injury after wearing.

Another respondent, Mrs. S Das mentioned about a different ritual for *annaprasan*. She termed it as *mukhe-bhaat*; where the father of the child will dip a gold ring or any gold object in the food, which is to be served to the child, and will make the child touch the gold object with his/her tongue.

A change in the custom is observed among the lower-income people for whom feeding the child with golden spoon and gifting gold jewellery on such occasions are not possible so they make the child touch a piece of jewellery, which, according to them, gives a stroke of good luck to the child. She also said that wearing gold jewellery will allow people to receive divine power (*shakti*), reduce the negative energy from the body of the wearer and will protect the child from the evil eye.

Another respondent, Mr. P Munshi, aged 42, said, *“I have seen my grandmother wearing heart-shaped design gold jewellery. She loves and prefers heart-shaped jewellery. At the time of my wedding when she took out her golden bracelet mounted with a heart-shaped design for gifting my wife, I teased her for favouring heart-shaped designs. She then expressed the reason behind her preferring this shape in gold jewellery. She said that it is the shape of Paan/betel leaf (not the shape of heart (symbolising love). Paan/betel leaf is a scared element for Hindus as it protects the wearer from evil powers and carrying/keeping a fresh Paan regularly is a complex task so the gold artisans has incorporated this shape in gold jewellery design to protect the wearer from evil powers. It is also a symbol of loyalty, love and fertility.”* Therefore, it can be interpreted that as gold is considered as scared metal to protect people from unevenness, so the shape of *Paan* is metaphorically used for making gold jewellery to protect people from malevolent chis.

Likewise, another respondent, Mrs. P Raha, aged 56, said that paddy is considered auspicious among the Hindus so the jewellery designed with the symbol of paddy, i.e., ‘V’ shape is preferred. Thus, the *karigars* who have the potential to implant such designs on gold jewellery help to endorse the ‘belief’ that gold jewellery possess divine power. At present, these types of shapes indicate atypical meaning rather than religious beliefs. For example, the shape of ‘*Paan*’ depicts the shape of ‘heart’, which means ‘love’. Therefore, these types of symbol on jewellery are still in demand but

having different meaning attached to it<sup>1</sup>. Here, we can see the close association of the design of gold jewellery with religious rituals/belief and how it is regenerating the social value of gold jewellery in this contemporary society with their hidden underneath meaning. We can easily find that there is a continuity in jewellery designs but a change is observed in terms of meaning attached to it. Mr U Prashad, *karigar*, also believes in connection between religious symbols and gold jewellery designs. He said, gold is a divine metal and if any religious symbol is made on this divine metal then it will bring positivity in the life of the wearer.

From history to present, gold plays an integral part in religious ceremonies. It has been observed that the Hindu calendar plays an imperative role in the life of the Hindus where a particular date is allotted as an auspicious day for the buyers of gold jewellery. Mr. S Talukdar expressed the importance of Bengali calendar '*pangika*' where certain days are mentioned auspicious for buying new gold coin/gold jewellery. The important days for gold jewellery purchase start with Bengali New Year i.e. during *Akshaya Trithiya (month of April/ Vaishak)*. On this first day of the year, people worship Lord Vishnu as *Lakshminarayan* at a specific time/*puja muhurat*, and a best mentioned time to purchase gold coin/gold jewellery is also allotted on the same day. It is also known as *Akha Teej* for non-Bengalis. It is believed that purchasing gold on this day will bring good luck and success to a family.

Similarly, there are few more festivals to buy gold jewellery, like *Diwali/Dhanterus, Onam, Daserra* and *Pongal*. Other than these festivals, gold jewellery is also purchased at the time of birthday, first rice eating ceremony of a new-born child, anniversary, wedding seasons, etc. Hindu wedding season is also mentioned in Hindu calendar and it depends on astrology and planetary change of horoscope. Considering the socio-economic life of the Indians, they were mostly engaged in primary occupations. During those times of the year when the returns of the hard work are received, they prefer spending at the wedding, which is associated with giving gifts. Thus, analytically it may

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<sup>1</sup> Ray, Lisa. 2012. "Oh My Gold! Season 1 Part 1". You-Tube Website. Retrieved Dec 11, 2012 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHjSDtdZgwE>), Ray, Lisa. 2012. "Oh My Gold! Season 1 Part 2". You-Tube Website. Retrieved Dec 12, 2012 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGmzzhdEe-w>), Ray, Lisa. 2012. "Oh My Gold! Season 1 Part 2". You-Tube Website. Retrieved Dec 14, 2012 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DT0NAboDDJY>), Ray, Lisa. 2012. "Oh My Gold! Season 1 Part 3". You-Tube Website. Retrieved Dec 18, 2012 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WQgtlFnC4A>)

be explained in a way that the harvest time that brings fortune to the family is associated with an inflow of income into the family, providing an opportunity to conduct the marriage. As gold is an integral part of marriage ceremony, it became a tradition in our society to follow the same culture of buying gold jewellery during wedding seasons over the years. According to Vedic astrology, God *Brihaspati* is the name of Jupiter, whose body is covered with gold who brings good luck to the wearer.

P C Chandra's astrologer (name not mentioned) spoke about some beliefs associated with metal gold—firstly, buying gold jewellery at a prescribed time mentioned in Bengali/Hindi calendar will bring fortune to the family. Secondly, wearing a piece of gold jewellery will invite positive energy and good health to the body. An astrological stone tied with gold signifies a hidden meaning that safeguards the wearer. For example, a ring on the middle finger will bring fame, on the index finger will increase concentration, on the ring finger for strong marital bond, and little finger for gold health issues, and thirdly, the astrological stone will swiftly function if it is covered with gold. He added another belief related with gold that is wearing *mangalsutra* or gold pendent around the neck in a form of chain or necklace will help the couple get rid of marital problems.

There are various interpretations of the close connection between the use of gold/gold jewellery and the Hindu religion. The tradition of buying gold jewellery at the time of religious occasions is still followed by the consumers in Siliguri. However, the religious connotation is gradually fading away, since nowadays the focus is on gift giving and gift taking or on to enhance the liquidity for oneself. It has become a trend for the Siliguri consumers, as for consumers in other places, to accumulate gold jewellery as status symbol as the jewellery always has a demonstration or exhibition value. The jewellers promote their brands, offer different forms of jewellery and provide discounts on gold jewellery to the consumers to make best use of the social values and beliefs attached to gold. All classes of people purchase gold jewellery in some form or the other on these days. People who have faith in astrology and religion keep a track on the Hindu calendar for consuming gold jewellery and the owners of jewellery shops make full utilization of this religious belief to increase their jewellery sales.

Moreover, gold is closely considered as an object of personal adornment, self-decoration and in mosques (Atei, Rezaei, & Abolfazil:2015) in Muslim Society. Muslim women can adorn any form and style of pieces of jewellery. It is observed that they prefer to wear Muslim designed *minakari* jewellery. However, Muslim men do not prefer to wear jewellery as they think it is made ‘only-for-women’. Unlike the Hindus, the Muslims do not believe in the association between gold jewellery and religion. However, gold jewellery gift giving is encouraged in Muslim culture, as it is a gesture to spread love in the family and friends. It is one of the customary rituals recommended by Prophet Muhammad to be practised in the name of ‘Allah’, as it gives equal value to others. At the time of *Eid-Al-Fitr* and on the last day of *Ramadan*, they prefer to gift clothes, perfume, food and sometimes jewellery.

Presently, gifting gold jewellery has become a common practice in the Muslim community and this practice has prompted the corporate jewellery showrooms to promote their jewellery even at the time of Muslims festivals, in order to shape and create a new habit among Muslims to purchase jewellery during the festive season, like Hindus. Corporate jewellers have taken certain initiatives in the forms of advertisements and promotional offers to influence Muslim psychology in order to encourage Muslim consumers to purchase gold jewellery/gold pendants/gold coin for gift-giving rituals. It is a process of adaptation, which help them maintain solidarity in Siliguri city.

One of my Muslim respondents, named Mrs. K Khatun, aged 48, said that she purchases gold jewellery at the time of *Poila Baishak* and *Akshaya Tritiya* as she believes if ‘good luck’ comes to the family then it is worth purchasing gold jewellery on such occasions.

P C Chandra salesman Mr. Choudhury said, “*we try to promote Muslim design jewellery during Eid-Al-Fitr and Ramdan. We make free calls to the registered customers and send forwarded messages on their festivals to make them aware of new gift-giving collection available at our showroom. Their choice of jewellery is religiously specific so they keep gold pendant, lockets, gold coins with Islamic symbol inscribed on it.*”

M P Jewellers salesman Mr. Majumdar said that Muslim consumers are equally important like Hindus to run their Siliguri showrooms. Their showrooms offer jewellery

for the members of both the religious communities. They also cater to Buddhist consumers by keeping Lord Buddha pendants. Muslim consumers prefer to buy jewellery mounted with original gemstone or artificial gemstone. For them, keeping *Jumkas*, *Balis*, *Pasa* and gold coin and gold biscuits with ‘Allah’ written on it in Urdu carries special value.

The attempt of corporate jewellers to construct a new attitude among Muslims succeeded when Muslim consumers started communicating with the corporate jewellers for buying jewellery for gift-giving purpose during religious occasions. This cultural force has influenced the traditional role-structure of Muslim community where economically backward people are preferring to visit traditional *swarnakars* on their festivals for buying jewellery.

In this era, the phrase ‘the society of producer’, used by Bauman, can be applied to the corporate jewellers or traditional *swarnakars*, who are playing an important role in preserving the religious belief connected to gold jewellery by routinizing the behaviour of their consumers—be it a symbolic meaning for Hindus or ‘gift-giving’ for Muslims. They are trying to maintain cultural solidarity by providing common offers for all religious occasions. Festivals bring all ethnic groups together where the buying behaviours are religiously specific but not religiously bound.

According to the Buddhist and Jain texts, the gold industry flourished during the later Vedic period. The tradition of adorning gold jewellery over the body had started from this period but wearing gold jewellery did not have any religious significance in Buddhism *per se*. The religious teaching of *Dhamma* portrays that the monks and nuns are not permitted to wear any form of jewellery during the time of retreat or at the time of meditation because, according to their belief, in order to achieve salvation in life, one should give up all pleasures of modern life and material objects. For them, gold is a symbol of fire and sun, which is attributed to good knowledge, sacredness, bliss, enlightenment and liberty. For making gold jewellery, gold is mixed with other metals such as copper, bronze or silver, which pollutes the purity of gold. Due to this, gold is used in the form of art in Buddhism but not in the form of jewellery. Except for monks and nuns, the devotees make gold jewellery in the form of a pendant. These pendants have some specific symbolic religious designs, which are tied/painted with gold; such

symbols are pairs of Gold Fish that symbolizes overcoming of difficulties; Gold Lotus Fish that symbolizes the attainment of the cleanliness of body, verbal communication, and frees mind from negativity; and Gold *Dharma Chakra* that symbolizes avoiding indulgences<sup>2</sup>. During the reign of Lord Buddha, all sections of people are hierarchically segregated and placed based on their caste structure possess gold jewellery with the symbols mentioned above. For the rich class people and kings, gold was used for decorating animals, such as elephants and horses. Both the middle *swarnakars* and corporate jewellers sell pendants that depict the whole sitting posture of Buddha's body on *Buddha Purnima* in order to attract Buddhist consumers.

The social value of gold jewellery is not directly proportional to religious belief, rather; it is the producer who is trying this method to bring consumers to purchase jewellery during the festive season. Thus, gold jewellery in India has some symbolic meaning attached to it. In contemporary society, the religious value attached to gold jewellery does not play any deciding role in preserving the religious beliefs associated with 'sacredness' of gold jewellery rather rationality for purchasing gold as a status symbol, prestige and liquidity is the prime objectives of Siliguri consumers to consume gold jewellery. It is the myth which the traditional *swarnakars* and the advertising agencies of Corporate brand try to connect the tradition by giving a reason for buying gold jewellery at *Dhanterus*, *Akshaya Trithia*, *Budhha Purnima* and *Eid-Al-Fitr* in a form of modern individual choice (Barthes 2009). It is a practice disseminated by them for its use value and exchange value.

### ***7.3 In Terms of Rational (material) Value***

Gold Jewellery has always been considered as a source of social and financial strength. From ages, people have tried to keep this precious metal to be exchanged for its monetary value. India has experienced various invasions by various rulers but what did not change over the years is the value of metal gold as it is associated with the economic and political development of the society. Even the *zamindars* used to showcase their supremacy and powers with the amount of gold they possess. People have always been

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<sup>2</sup> *Gold in Buddhism*. Retrieved Oct 4, 2017.

([https://www.mygoldguide.in/search/apachesolr\\_search/?key=gold%20in%20buddhism](https://www.mygoldguide.in/search/apachesolr_search/?key=gold%20in%20buddhism))

lured to buy and keep gold in forms of coins, bars for future security. In this contemporary Siliguri city, purchasing/giving gold jewellery is valued more when it is measured by its monetary value rather than by its religious value.

Mrs. S R Chowdhury (aged 40), Mrs. S Das (aged 55), Mrs. S Chatterjee (aged 50), Mrs. G Sarkar and many other respondents have accepted the social value of gold jewellery at the time of wedding. The father of the bride traditionally buys gold jewellery at the time of *Diwali* or *Dhanterus* or *Akshaya Tritiya* for his daughter as a wedding gift or as dowry. Both social value and emotional value are attached to the plan of investing money on gold jewellery for daughter's wedding. Thus, for the father of the bride gold jewellery is an investment. If a bride gets more gold jewellery from the groom's side (which is rare in Indian society), it indicates a sign of love and gesture of acceptance she received from the groom's side.

One of my respondents Mr. P Nandi, aged 45, said that his wife had purchased a gold chain for him six years ago, and during the time of demonetization, he was neither able to obtain money from Bank due to long queues, nor could withdraw from ATM. At that time, he was facing financial crisis so he had to mortgage his gold chain to his family's traditional jeweller. He gladly asserted that the amount he received was much higher than the cost price as the price of gold during that time of mortgage was high. This shows how gold still plays a crucial role in maintaining social security.

It was considered the best investment for future security as the value of gold increases over time. Gold can always be utilized to get liquidity at the time of need by keeping it as a mortgage or by selling the gold. It could be utilized to get a loan at the time of financial need. Although it is not used as the currency, it is always being considered powerful in terms of trade. People used to store gold because the value of gold will never go down and the same can be passed on from generations to generations.

We can see that the advertisers use all possible means to sell gold jewellery to the consumers. Sometimes they advertise it as investment option by spreading the awareness of Hallmark Jewellery (22 karat) and they also advertise lightweight jewellery (10 karats to 18 karat gold jewellery) at a cheaper rate. Keeping the stiff rise in price of gold the traders lower the quality of the jewellery in terms of purity to cater

to the needs of the young generation and the poor and middleclass consumers, who constitute a significant part of the consumers. To quote Menon, “In modern times, interest has grown in gold as purely an investment medium, the market has begun demanding gold nearly-fine quality... a purity of 99.99 per cent, as close to pure 24-karat gold as is practically possible” (Menon 2015:121). Contrary to Menon’s work, it is found that the Siliguri consumers prefer pure gold (22 karat). It is the highest karat, by which Indians universally make their gold jewellery. Only among a section of Nepali customers, there is a high demand for 24 karat gold jewellery.

Ms. R Subba and Ms. N Rai have stated that buying gold for marriage purpose or to gift to their kin, they make gold jewellery made up of 24 karats. Such gold jewellery are known as Nepali Gold Jewellery, which have specific traditional designs. Even if they have to buy gold jewellery for daily wear purpose, they prefer 24 karat gold jewellery. They neither compromise on the purity of gold jewellery nor do they try to deviate from their culture of not reducing the purity of the gold from 24 to 22 karat.

Before the year 2000, purity of gold was measured through KDM (cadmium-soldered gold jewellery) where the buyers were unable to measure/identify the exact purity of gold. Investing in gold jewellery either for personal use, or for wedding, or for dowry or as a source of financial security was prevalent in traditional society and still, the same reasons for investment continue but in this contemporary society giving certification on purchasing every gold/gold jewellery has generated a strong attachment to purchase BIS Hallmarked gold jewellery for investment. With the change in the government policies and the economic condition of the country, common people are encouraged to invest in gold, as the value of gold has increased exponentially over the last 60 years when it is calculated with the interest earned from the bank or share market (Singh 2013).

Mr. P Mitra, aged 25, said that the corporate jewellers provide certified Hallmarked jewellery to the consumer. People who were unable to afford to buy gold jewellery they exchange their old KDM gold jewellery/gold coins to purchase new certified Hallmarked jewellery from an authentic buyer or to sell old gold jewellery and get maximum money against it. So, according to her opinion, old gold jewellery/gold coins have good exchange value if they are wisely sold. She suggested avoiding exchanging

gold jewellery for gems stone or artificial stone as there is no exchange value of the stones.

Likewise, a similar concept has evolved with an easier transaction for the consumers in the forms of schemes and bonds. All my respondents have agreed that buying gold is a good investment but it does not mean that they buy gold 'only for investment'. Traditionally, it has worked as a financial support, and till the present day, the rational value of investment remains the same, keeping the fluctuating economic conditions and occasional crises.

Mr. K Prasad, aged 57, a small *swarnakar*, observed that there was a shift in consumer behaviour, a shift of consumers from traditional *swarnakars* to branded corporate jewellery houses because there was no Hallmark centre in Siliguri, which the small *swarnakars* could have accessed. The corporate jewellers, on the other hand, follow the practice of issuing purity certificate on every single purchase. Consumers are aware of the fact that hallmarked jewellery will provide good monetary returns if it is exchanged for cash in future. This has become a challenging task for traditional *swarnakars* to offer authentic hallmark gold to the Siliguri consumers (i.e. before the year 2018). Mr. Prasad has observed that a change in the perspective of the Siliguri consumers in terms of investment and financial security. At the time of demonetization, big traders/businessman in Siliguri, having black money, preferred to purchase gold jewellery from traditional *swarnakars* to avoid government surveillance. They avoided the branded corporate showrooms in Siliguri for fear of being caught. People with clean money preferred to purchase from branded shops as they are given purity certificate for the quantity and quality of gold.

Consumer perceptions for investing on gold jewellery is a continuous process, which enhances individual's social status. Indian government has brought about two modes for investing on gold. The first way of investment is to buy the material gold in the form of jewellery, bars or coins. We can see that nowadays the gold prices are at a peak, which has become impossible even for middle-class people to purchase gold jewellery. To maintain the tradition and faith, the corporate jewellery showrooms have released a new scheme for purchasing gold jewellery on a monthly basis, known as Gold Saving Schemes (Monthly Scheme for 12 months or 6 months), where the consumer pays a

certain amount of cash on a monthly or weekly basis to the respective jewellery shop as per the scheme. On maturity, the customer opting for the scheme are given some bonus. Traditionally, it was known as ‘*khata system*’, where the consumers used to pay the amount of gold jewellery to the traditional *swranakars* on an instalment basis, where they can pay a flexible amount to the *swarnakar* at whatever time/day they choose for. This same model is copied by the corporate jewellers to target middle-class population. They run the scheme by making a paper document in the form of an agreement made between the company and the consumer to receive cash on a fixed date of every month.

Mr. D Mazumdar said, “*At the end of the term of the Gold Scheme, consumers can purchase gold jewellery at the value equivalent to the deposit money adding some interest by the respective jewellery shop/showrooms. These forms of strategies have made easy accessibility in purchasing gold jewellery without mental/economic burden for those individuals who belong to the middle class and the lower-class groups*”.

The second way of investment on gold is materialized in the form of documentation, which is known as ‘paper gold’. In this scheme, people purchase Gold Bonds and Gold Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) (Dhawan 2019) which provides interest to people, similar to physical gold. Trading in gold also provides an alternative direction for the investors to invest on raw gold. Moving into a paper asset of gold, it also continued to be the first choice of investment for the jewellery consumers among my respondents who feel that this method of investment cuts down additional expenses such as gold jewellery making charges, storage and packaging cost of gold jewellery, GST and so on. The main objective of ‘Paper Gold’ is to get the market value of gold in future. The eight largest gold ETF are as follows:

- Aditya Birla Sun Life Gold Fund
- SBI Gold Fund
- Reliance Gold Saving Fund
- Kotak Gold Fund
- ICICI Prudential Regular Gold Saving Fund
- HDFC Gold Fund

- Axis Gold Fund
- Canara Robeco Gold Savings Fund

All these schemes of gold have helped the investors to opt for easy access directly by themselves (Menon 2015:127). This gold bond is for those consumers who are self-employed, who have the least interest in purchasing gold jewellery, or who are economically independent, and who are not very keen to accumulate gold jewellery in a bigger quantity. It is an easier method of transaction for the consumers as the banks have started giving gold bonds at the real-time value of gold, which can be purchased and sold as per the convenience of the consumers. This scheme is more secure than any other risky investment like those on lands and shares; people find it more lucrative to invest in gold. The consumers of Siliguri are inclined to buying gold jewellery. They prefer both traditional and modern jewelleries depending on the type of occasion or festivals they attend. Sometimes, people who were unable to buy gold jewellery exchange their old jewellery with the new ones by paying making-charge of the *karigar*. Thus, for them, old gold jewellery acts as an investment. In India, investment motive is the main motive behind purchase of gold jewellery. Interestingly, India is popularly known as world's largest gold consumer country holding 11<sup>th</sup> largest gold reserves in 2019 where gold was measured in 607 tonnes, reported by the World Gold Council<sup>3</sup>. Although the market value and price of gold are always unpredictable, it has never shown any drop-down in the price, which may generate loss to the person who possesses gold. It has never crossed its yardstick for the last 60 years. For this reason, the production cost of gold is best for investment rather than investment in diamond jewellery (Bose 2013). Eventually, in this contemporary Siliguri City, giving gold jewellery is valued more as it is measured by its monetary value rather than its religious value, *i.e.*, 'sacredness'.

#### ***7.4 In Terms of Social Status and Social Bond***

Max Weber has defined the status situation as, "every typical component of the life of men that is determined by specific, positive and negative, social estimation of honour" (Gerth & Mills 1946:187). To him, status is linked with a specific lifestyle, which is immediately connected with the consumption of goods. It will lead people to feel free

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<sup>3</sup> *World Gold Council*. Retrieved March 12, 2019 from [dristiiias.com: \(https://www.dristiiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/world-gold-council\)](https://www.dristiiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/world-gold-council)

to take a new identity in the status hierarchy. Consumption of gold jewellery lies in religious practices whereas wearing it over the body is a socio-cultural practice. It is observed that even the social status of the metal workers, “during the past two thousand years” were also vertically divided in terms of caste. For example, Lohar caste holds the third position in caste hierarchy but sonar caste of Punjab is “considered as semi-clean by Brahmins” as they were permitted to put on a sacred thread by holding caste status as Vaishya (Mills, Claus, & Diamond 2003:398). This brings out strict cultural segregation where the social position was maintained and based on the metal in the Indian caste system. As an imaginary rule, the upper caste was allowed to wear jewellery made up of gold and gems, but the lower caste (especially the Sudras) /tribe was not permitted to wear jewellery made up of gold. They use silver, bronze, copper, other metals for jewellery (Dube 2004). Thus, the purity of gold represents a symbol of social status only for higher caste. As mentioned earlier, gold is closely connected with Hinduism thus the jewellery market is constructed based on religious belief to merchandise gold/gold jewellery. The inclination of people to preserve gold jewellery becomes a habit to rationalise it by passing from one generation to another where the social status of a person depends on the specific honour connected with ‘class situation’ which is determined by a specific ‘style of life’ they belonged to. Equally, we have considered that gold has enjoyed a high position during the ancient and medieval times where rulers luxuriated gold in clothes, utensils, for gifting and adornment. The tradition to hold the owner of gold jewellery is stereotypically consumed for embracing the quantity and quality of gold jewellery they own. Therefore, gold jewellery is a status symbol that separated one caste from another and from one class to another class. Those who are identified with power are at the same time the accumulator of gold and gold ornaments. It is the power to draw the attention of others (who possess less gold jewellery or jewellery made of other metal than gold) to themselves by showing their capability and capacity in preserving gold jewellery, which indicates the higher social status in the society.

According to the author Asa Berger, “the objects and artefacts that play such an important role in our everyday lives... the importance of material goods to people as giving them a sense of their value and goodness” (Berger 2014:97) is part of a habitual exchange of material to build a kinship bond. In Indian society, jewellery made up of gold is held in the form of movable property received by women after marriage. It is a

route where a daughter receives gold jewellery from her father, mother, brother and husband at the time of her marriage (or before/after marriage). Therefore, gold jewellery is popularly termed as *streedhan* (Jolly 1889:54). As a *streedhan*, it is an economic right to accept gold jewellery in the form of gift (Viswanatha 1928:225) to secure their future.

Mr. B Goswami, aged 71, a consumer, said that marriage and gold jewellery holds a strong connection as they coincide with each other. ‘*No gold jewellery means no marriage*’ is a popular saying, which indicates marriage is incomplete without gold jewellery. Nowadays, women are economically independent and can purchase jewellery for themselves. Previously, men used to hold the inherited property- like land, money, house etc. Property, which women used to hold as a material object is the gold jewellery that she receives from her parents or at the time of the wedding.

This illustration means it is the only object that plays a dual role in the life of women— first, it will enhance her beauty after adorning it and secondly, her financial status will be secured for its monetary value, and, at the same time, it enhances her social standing in her affinal family (Veblen 2005). Besides, it exposes an intimate connection between gold jewellery and the social status of a person where gold is used as a token at the time of marriage for showcasing family prestige to heighten their social status in front of the invitees, i.e., kin members and community members.

On the other side, the material possession of gold jewellery by the bride will secure her position in the affinal family. More specifically, she will get respect, honour, and love from affinal kin members. This means the status hierarchy of a person is depending on the amount of gold jewellery they hold. It is seen as a luxury good indicates the status symbol of the wearer.

Mrs. M D Dutta, aged 31, a consumer, said that “at the time of *bodhu-boron*, a customary ritual performed by my *sasuri*/mother-in-law to receive me after the marriage at their house, the latter addressed me by saying *lokkhi elo ghore*/Goddess *Lakshmi entered her house*.

Mrs. B Paswan, aged 38, a consumer, said “*Vadhu-griha-pravesh* is a wedding ritual to welcome *ghar ki Lakshmi* when the bride enters groom’s house for the first time”.

These ritualistic practices indicate that the new bride will bring good luck, happiness, prosperity to the groom’s family. In this contemporary society, people perform this ritual only for saying sake that Goddess Lakshmi had entered the house with the new bride or new bride is referred to as Goddess Lakshmi. The fundamental meaning behind this belief is that she has brought an enormous quantity of gold and money (dowry) with her, which will add financial security to the in-law’s family. This is a habitual tendency followed by the people in the name of ritual and customs to inherit gold jewellery to unveil family prestige.

Marriage and other social functions are considered as the occasions for women to show off the varieties of gold jewellery they possess by wearing them on various parts of their body. These jewellerys symbolise their social status. Giddens has said that ‘adornment is altruistic’ meaning the wearer of gold jewellery will enjoy wearing it only when the feeling of self-importance is correspondingly reflected from the viewer towards the wearer (Frisby & Featherstone 1997:207). This is the reason for the people who try to fit into the social gathering for fulfilling their desire and to receive appreciation from the others to make oneself happy. For reaching out for happiness, she tries to please others. They try to please others by giving compliment on jewellery worn by others and expect to get the same compliment from others in return. This expectation of being recognised is the sole purpose of being admired by others (Frisby & Featherstone 1997:206,207).

Jewellery is valued as a commodity when it is used as an object in ceremonial exchange. The subjective value of the gold jewellery expresses individual value attached to the gold jewellery. When gold jewellery is connected with an individual value, a strong relationship develops between the giver and the receiver of the gold jewellery. In this manner, gold jewellery works as a system of social communication between people. However, in contemporary society, the concept of *streedhan* is not associated with dowry; it means that a woman receives gifts at the time of her marriage. Wearing gold jewellery in Indian culture is like conspicuous consumption (Veblen 2005) where the main attraction of any social event lies in the jewellery worn by the bride/chid/or any

female person; rather than men wearing gold jewellery. If in case men wear a piece of gold jewellery at the wedding, it will be indicative of a dowry demand placed by the groom's family at the time of marriage. However, this perception about gold and gold jewellery is into transition where the contemporary men adorn jewellery for showcasing his class (Barthes 2009).

Mrs. S Mitra, aged 40, thinks that the Hindu tradition dictates that married women should wear *sakha*, *pola* and *lohabadhano*. However, in Siliguri city now the concept of following this tradition has faded and has been limited to *lohabadhano* (iron bangle coated with gold) as a symbol for protecting husband from evil spirits. Despite this, in India, gold jewellery is still associated with marriage and so is dowry. They are two sides of the same coin and dowry is attached to the demand for gold jewellery. This is one of the primary reasons for the prevalence of dowry deaths in India.

Likewise, gold jewellery acts as a mediator between the giver and the receiver after it is received at the time of the birth of a child, rice eating ceremony, marriage anniversary, engagements, birthday and such similar events. It is the sign-in form of gift that publicizes commitment to one another. It is deeply attached to emotional assistance.

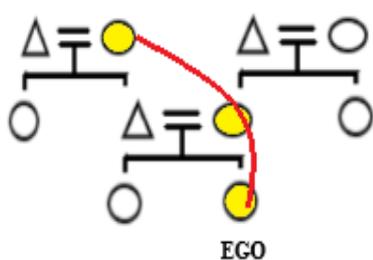


Figure 7.1: Kinship Relation 1

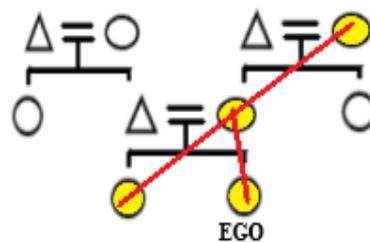


Figure 7.2: Kinship Relation 2

In Indian customs, inherited gold jewellery is given more value than the newly purchased ones. There is social, emotional and heritage value associated with gold jewellery, which is passed on for many generations. There is a special sentiment associated with a mother-in-law handing over the gold jewellery to daughter-in-law to

granddaughter (see Figure 7.1) or mother handing over her inherited jewellery to the daughter/ grand-daughters (see Figure 7.2).

Gold jewellery is the symbolic representation of family tradition which provides a sense of being worthy of receiving the jewellery and acceptance of a new member to the family. Mrs. S Raha, aged 51, another respondent, said that at the time of her wedding, her father had passed down the tradition of giving the *punjabi/sherwani* Button made up of gold attached with connected gold chain, to her husband. Her father had received the gift on his wedding day from his parents-in-law. So, her husband had passed down the same inherited gift to her daughter's husband as a family heirloom. This shows that gold jewellery is passed down as inheritance either through lineage or through marriage (see Figure 7.3).

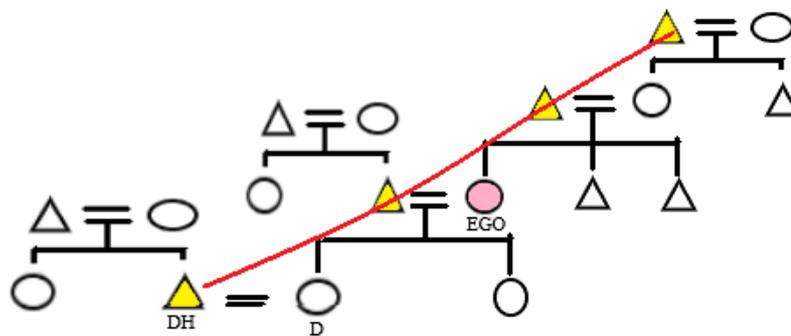


Figure 7.3: Kinship Relation 3

Mrs. S Talukdar, aged 42, said that her husband has inherited a gold watch from her bilateral side of kinship relation. The following diagram (Figure 7.4) shows how inherited jewellery is passed down to the next generations and this inherited jewellery plays the same role in continuing the tradition, i.e. gifting the gold watch to a son-in-law. Figure 7.4 shows that Secondary's Primary kin member, i.e., the mother's uncle (mother's father's elder brother) had received the gold wristwatch at the time of his wedding. He and his wife had passed down the gift, not to their children but to his primary kin, i.e., their youngest brother at his wedding. Then the tradition follows the same trend to pass it to the next generation that too on the female side.

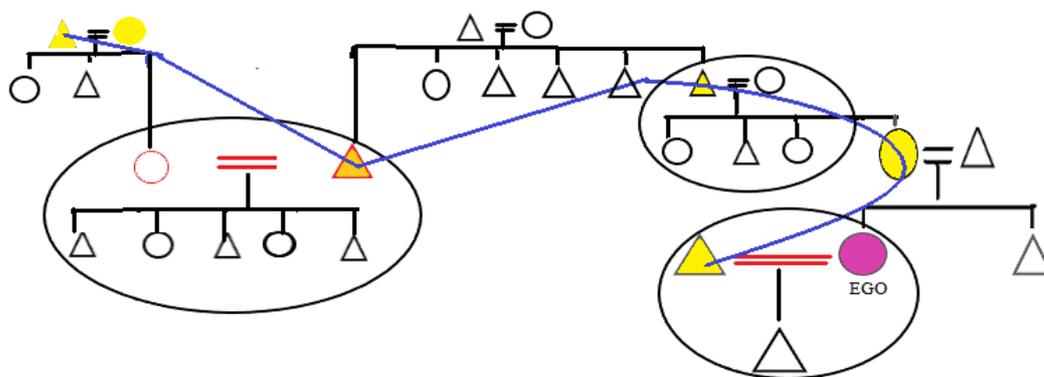
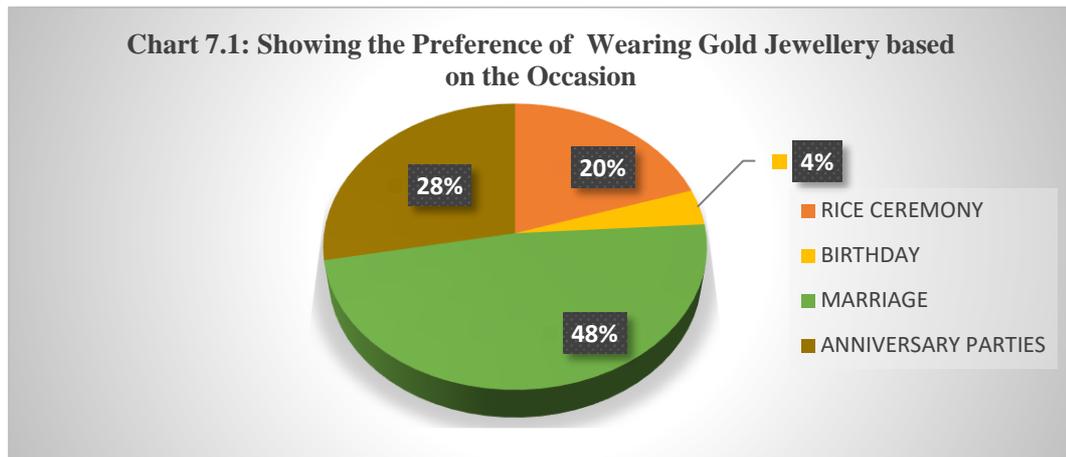


Figure 7.4: Kinship Relation 4

This figure highlights that inherited jewellery can be passed down to other primary kin members other than the decedent.

Mrs. B Jain, aged 40, said that inheritance of jewellery at the time of wedding does not happen in her family. She inherited jewellery from her mother at the time of birthday and anniversary. But she never got gold jewellery as a gift. At the time of the wedding, they prefer to go for trendy jewellery-set matching with their wedding dress. Passing down of jewellery is done when the person is unable to maintain the heritage. Generally, an inheritance of jewellery moves from mother to daughter to granddaughter and so on. Inheritance of jewellery has been the attention of Bengali bride at the time of her wedding. It poses a strong bond between the giver and the receiver of the jewellery. It is not a one-to-one relationship between two persons. It is the relationship, which constructs the social value of giving (Veblen 2005). Women are very fond of traditional designs and the ethnic value associated with such designs. The new trendy designs are welcomed but these types of lightweight jewellery are used for daily wear. The traditional jewellery is heavy and gorgeous which every woman loves receiving as a gift. Passing down the heritage brings the element of emotion attached to the material object in the form of memories and stories of the earlier generation, which help develop strong social bonds. Therefore, gold jewellery as a material object manifests in stabilizing and maintaining social relations (Berger 2014:65) to make the receiver feel incredibly special about herself/himself. It also expresses true love and gratefulness for having the person in their life. It strengthens the relationship by valuing the personal attachment between the giver and the receiver of the gifts (Berger 2014:78). Due to all

this, gold jewellery is significantly continuing its value in maintaining the social relationship on one side, and on the other side, it is enhancing the social status of the giver as well as the receiver.



*Source: Primary Survey, September 2017-August 2018*

Pie Chart 7.1 shows that the consumers in Siliguri prefer to wear gold jewellery at the time of marriage. It shows that marriage is a crucial part of people in Siliguri where traditional attire and traditional designs with a trendy touch of gold jewellery are the pillars of marriage. Other than these, the branded jewellery also determines status in society. Buying jewellery from 'which shop' is an added tendency of the consumers after an exhibition of gold jewellery.

Mrs. S Dugar, aged 30, said that the brand itself is symbol of status. According to her, when she said that she has purchased jewellery from a branded showroom, especially from Tanishq, it gave them an impression that she belongs to an economically high class.

Mr. O Bhowmick, aged 50, shared similar views with regard to buying gold jewellery from branded showrooms. He said that from childhood he has seen his family members purchasing gold jewellery from local jewellers for personal use and for gifting purpose. But at the time of his marriage, he preferred to purchase jewellery from a branded jewellery showroom because the 'Brand is itself is a status' symbol. He thinks that gifting branded jewellery to his wife will showcase his social position. And his thinking turned into reality. When his mother displayed the wedding jewellery to his kin

members, before his *ashirwad*, they were not giving much importance to the quantity of gold rather they were mesmerized by seeing the brand name (i.e. Tanishq). This made him flaunt his social position in front of his kin members. For him, it is not the wealth that he is showcasing but uplifting his family position and prestige by showing off the brand name. From then on, he continued to purchase gold jewellery from branded showrooms because it has enhanced his social status.

The majority of the respondents are from the Bengali community, for whom marriage is an occasion when they showcase their gold jewellery. On the day of the marriage, they wear inherited gold jewellery received from their mother or grandmother. The style and designs of Bengali jewellery are different from that of other communities. The Bengali *karigars* and jewellery makers mostly make jewellery with their hands, and their handcrafted jewellery has a different demand in other parts of the country. One of the respondents from Tanishq (name not mentioned) reveals that the *karigars* from Kolkata, who know the art of making Bengali designed gold jewellery, are recruited in their jewellery workshop, located in different places. As the demand for Bengali jewellery is high, despite machine-made jewellery, it is found that having a gold jewellery shop in Siliguri is regarded as dignity. It raises their status in the society. Side by side, the proficiency of the *karigars* gets enhanced when they are capable of manufacturing/crafting Bengali designed jewellery. They take it as a pride to learn the technique of making gold jewellery because this proficiency increases their value in the jewellery making industry. Therefore, the importance of a *karigar* grows when he is an expert in making traditional Bengali designed jewellery that eventually boosts his social status.

### ***7.5 In Terms of Body Image and Fashion***

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, women occupy a prominent position in the advertisement industry, as a mark of participation in outdoor activities; they thus challenge the patriarchal domination. The world of advertisement, which is growing fast alongside the spread of consumer culture, offers a wide range of employment opportunities to the women in general and attractive younger women in particular. It is generally believed that the work participation of women makes them economically self-reliant and brings them

higher social status. The women are playing an increasingly significant role in the advertisement industry by working as models, endorsing all kinds of products such as 'general products, women products and the products for men uses' (Vani 2010:173). They have become a cultural image in representing themselves in every professional field. The professional field can be from residential work to the world of beauty. The young women dream of engaging themselves in advertisements thus turning their body-beauty personality as a human resource, if not as a commodity. The women body thus 'become a key site of political, cultural, social and economic intervention' (Hancock 2000:1). One can also notice the cultural legitimacy in the presentation of body-beauty in the advertisement world, which is considered as a means of empowerment and a new way of life.

Moreover, the process of portraying women image is best on the idea of "ideal body image", which is a social construct in a given point of time and in a given social space. This ideal body (physical appearance and beauty) of women is projected by the mass media in a given time, but it can change with changing time and context. Women imagine themselves in the light of the media projected "ideal body", which works like a "discourse" that manifestly influences the women who are in advertisements and the women in general, even those who are not in feature and not even think of featuring in advertisements. The idea of a fetish called "ideal body" is so deep and grand to cover the self-image of women, and men's sense of "beautiful women", which is directly linked with sexuality.

Goffman in his work "Territories of the Self" has explained that the body signifies "identity, social order, and emotional order- and in a manner that is personal and communal, private and political, confidential and public all at once" (Waskul 2006:1-18; Waskul & Riet 2011). Thus, it reveals that women's body image in advertisements gives a new identity publicly as well as in private spear of life. Jewellery is a material object that is every close to every woman. While playing a part in jewellery advertisement women get emotionally involved with the jewellery since it symbolises their sense of beauty. Thus, the role in jewellery advertisement is pre-ordained to women because women wear jewellery more than men, and the beauty of her body gets enhanced with its use. This explains that the advertisers look only for the body image of women in jewellery advertisement because jewellery constructs an image of

authority for women. Side by side, like body image of women in an advertisement, is associated with the body shape and size so even sexuality is also consumer-oriented (Hancock 2000:1-11). As a result, of these consequences, 'it determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relations of women to themselves' (Cohen & Kennedy 2007:345). In Marxist cultural theory, much emphasis is laid on the production and consumption of the cultural artefacts where material objects are the central things of aesthetics. In this fashion, cultural products like jewellery are promoted through advertisements in televisions, magazines, hoardings, and brochures, which reproduce a societal sense of aesthetics, which is artificial (fetish). So the 'art' of designing jewellery is not a 'pure' aesthetic realm rather it represents the producer and commercial actors (Nayar 2013:143) to promote the product. Turner has explained that the body must be understood as socially constructed. He argues that human body should be regulated, trained, disciplined (like Foucault's) in a line of dominant social norms or standard which not only helps to construct the "discourse beauty" but also regulates the self-reproduction; the emphasis is on "self-preservation and self-maintenance" or "care of the self". Young women are more concerned with their physical appearance before marriage as they wear different types of jewellery on different parts of the body which fits into 'women-self-image' and socially constructed image of a bride, which transcendent class and caste barriers. This women self-image is associated with physical appearance throughout their lives (Turner 1984).

Thus, in jewellery advertisement women are obsessed with the beauty care regime-weight reduction, sexiest and insensitive. They make all efforts to improve their appearances to look beautiful and attractive. Women try to wear jewellery for all parts of the body to catch men's attention to them. Thus, the body of women presented and reproduced in jewellery advertisement, leaves a huge appeal not only on women's self-image but also on the men who play a big role in the decision making with regard to jeweller purchase. Advertisers are also recruiting slim, beautiful, fair, clean face and young women for company advertisements, because that fits into the socially shared image of beautiful women. Therefore, these body images of women in advertisement play a crucial role in influencing consumer social interaction. This contemporary society is indicated by the dominance of a mediated image created by the mass media.

Media plays a significant role in shaping self-image. It objectifies the women's body. The use of women models in advertisements is the root of consumerism. For jewellery advertisement, women are generally produced and reproduced as decorative pieces since ages. The contents of the advertisement include how to choose jewellery, what type of jewellery is perfect for what type of occasions, or how would ornament make the body beautiful, smart and graceful. I have chosen three advertisements from corporate jewellery brands in Siliguri as per my case studies are concerned.

### **1. *Tanishq***

Tanishq's ad in the year 2013, (Picture 7.1) has de-constructed the regular concept of beauty where the jewellery is transforming an average looking woman into a beautiful bride. This ad shows that the bride has a dusky complexion, flat nose with an average physical feature, not "beautiful" in the sense of the so-called 'ideal beauty' i.e. fair-skinned, virgin bride, slim body size and so on. The ad in the figure is path-breaking. It celebrates the idea of remarriage of women with a daughter, which is not yet "normal" even in a metropolitan city like Siliguri. The ads also challenge the conventional body image of a bride and the idea of 'virginity' as an essential qualification for marriage. Our society is obsessed with a perfect marriage where marriage can occur only once but with the changing time, women are getting a chance for remarriage. When widow or divorcee women are going for remarriage, they prefer registry marriage over religious marriage. Hence, this ad re-defines our cultural perception for marriage and remarriage. Tanishq ads target two types of consumers- women with an average physical appearance and single mother (Picture 7.2). This ad reveals that the women who feel insecure or miserable about their look can be made "beautiful" with the appropriate use of jewellery. Here, the subjective 'self' of women in an advertisement has been objectified by the advertisers where an average looking women is made "attractive" only when she adorns herself with the jewellery; this also boots her confidence in presenting herself in the beauty market where the slim and fair looking body is considered beautiful and attractive.

The commodity, the jewellery and the brand name together add to the social status of the women. The advertisements break the stereotypical beauty standards and the so-called 'ideal' image of a bride. The elegance of jewellery, its exchange values (the

price), the matter used (silver, gold, platinum, and diamond) and the brand name together gives a mystic value to the ornaments, which leaves inward and outward impacts. In this whole process, mediated image largely endorsed by the society leaves a constraining effect on the body image and presentation of self of women in the light of the use of jewellery.



Picture 7.1: Bride has a Dusky Complexion



Picture 7.2: Single Mother Re-Marriage

## 2. M P Jewellers

In most of the ads, *M P Jewellers* tries to highlight the upper body part of women. In *Picture 7.3*, it is visualized that both the model had adorned their bare shoulder with the necklace instead of wearing it on the front of the neck, and their sideway glance of the face signifies sexual appeal. An exposed neck is a form of submission and is aggressively flirtatious (*Picture 7.3*) and the tag line of these ads “I’m the reason” shows what? Flirtatious nature or sexual appeal! Again, the length of the model’s exposed neck in *Pictures 7.3 and 7.4* shows women’s trust and willingness to submit to men. It can easily catch man’s eyes on her because it has often been associated with beauty and youthfulness. Tossing of earring on the back of her neck in *Picture 7.3* with a tilted head to the side also attracts the viewer’s attention on it. By avoiding clothing *Picture 7.4* helps to avoid the distraction of the viewers with the clothes rather than the jewellery. Thus, the image of the jewellery products became the main point of attraction in these advertisements.

<sup>4</sup> Tanishq makes a point’ by Meenakshi Verma Ambwani, published on October 31, 2013, on Hindu Business Line, Retrieved January 4, 2016 (<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/variety/tanishq-makes-a-point/article23028840.ece>)

<sup>5</sup> ‘Tanishq gets thumbs up for breaking norms and celebrating remarriage in new ad’, published by India Today on October 28, 2013, Retrieved January 4, 2016 ( <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/tanishq-new-advertisement-on-remarriage/1/320581.html>)



Picture 7.3: Hanging wedding necklace in shoulder Picture 7.4: Exposed neck to highlight the Jewellery

### 3. P C Chandra Jewellers

P C Chandra Jewellers in most of the advertisement showcases wedding jewellery. Recently, in 2017 ads, they portrayed Bengali women's wedding to non-Indian groom portrayed the acceptance of inter-community marriage, in this contemporary society. They always highlight the Bengali culture of Kolkata in association with the wedding gold jewellery. The respondent of my study (name not mentioned) said that their *karigars* are specialised *karigars* who are continuing this occupation for several generations. P C Chandra has always enjoyed a higher brand value among the Bengalis as they are known to provide exclusive traditional Bengali jewellery designs even in their modern contemporary designs. They expertise in the art of incorporating traditional touch to the jewellery which has proven to attract the Bengali consumers, as they cherish the presence of an authentic art form in the jewellery, they wear. In every advertisement, they portrait the relationship between the parents and daughter at the time of the wedding, and celebrates this pure and unbreakable bond of love. The purity of their bond is like the purity of gold.

In all the above advertisements, women are put as a sign in a patriarchal discourse. The image and the representation of women in these advertisements are just opposite of what they are trying to construct women identity as—i.e., independent, self-sufficient, strong and courageous. However, these modern women in jewellery advertisements live in fantasies and are obsessed with the idea of looking beautiful and getting employed in advertising agencies as a model by reproducing their body as a commodity. These

<sup>6</sup> (<https://satyakighosh.com/advertising/m-p-jewellers>)

<sup>7</sup> M P Jewellers, Jewellery store, Retrieved January 4, 2015

(<http://www.aayojan.in/index.php/en/ads/574eeb4539dc7/Jewellery-Stores/MP-Jewellers>)

self-sufficient women who are the models of the advertisement agencies signify her body by focusing attention to her body, neck, below the collar bone, cleavage, bare shoulder, skin colour, wrist, fingers nose and ear. Thus, when a female entered the advertisement industry, her sexuality is highlighted. According to Berger, “Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at...” in this way a woman “became trapped in a male gaze” (Cohen and Kennedy 2007: 354). In this manner, advertisement produces subjective body image in an objective form. And when the body is objectified, the image of women turned into a ‘sign’ but this ‘sign’ is not the real sign of that particular women rather it creates simulation among the consumers. From this perspective, it reveals that, “body of an object cannot be separated from the body as a subject...” (Waskul and Van der Riet 2002). Such embodiments of women’s beauty make the women into an object to be gazed at by both men and women. Women gaze for subjective analysis of their ideal concept of the female body whereas male gaze as sexual objects. Charles Horton Cooley’s concept ‘looking glass-self’ explains that the embodiment of ‘self’ is reproduced and one’s imagination towards his or her own image and how others observe ‘ones-self’ is replicated. This imaginary perspective plays an essential role in the advertisement models or the brand ambassadors of any jewellery products. Such self-feelings of looking good or bad depend on how the consumers perceive them as an object. As a result of this, women’s body image in an advertisement sometimes gives them satisfaction and honour, when their own ‘self’ resemble with the ‘other self’ (i.e. how consumers perceive body image of women in the advertisement); and if it is not semblance then the women will be ashamed of her self-image created an advertisement. Thus, Cooley’s concept of self in ‘looking glass-self’ represents ‘body image’ in this perspective where the objective-body becomes subjective-body.

Like other beauty advertisement, even in jewellery advertisement, the model tend to give more importance to their physical attributes and other beauty aids (weight reduction, maintain diet, make up and so on). They are seen as striving to improve their appearances to look beautiful and attractive. Women try to wear jewellery for all parts of the body to catch men’s attention to them. Thus, studying consumers’ view on jewellery sectors gives a great appeal to the men and women as a consumer to look forward to more advertisement where women are playing a major role in promoting products. As a result, advertisers are also recruiting slim, beautiful, fair, clean face and

young women for the advertisements. Therefore, these body images of women in advertisement play a crucial role in influencing consumer psyche. This post-modern society is dominated by a mediated image created by the mass media.

### ***7.6 Summary of the Chapter***

This has been one of the revealing chapters of the present study. Gold the metal, and the jewellery made of gold have multiple sources of drawing value. The cultural tradition, religion, the social obligations, will to beautification, the sense of security and investment, social functions add value to gold jewellery. Then there are an elaborate social and cultural arrangement for reproducing the value of the gold jewellery. There is a power angle as well since the power structure and the lineages pass on the value of gold jewellery, both traditionally and in contemporary time. The traders understand the social and cultural reproduction of gold jewellery and make full use of the social sentiments to create artificial fetishized needs in order to promote their business. The big business in particular use attractive advertisements using attractive models while using cultural symbols to instigate and reproduce the buying spree in the volatile gold jewellery market of modern time.