

Design Resource

Traditional Silver Jewelry - Kutch, Gujarat

Silver Jewelry

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Ranjitha M C

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat>



1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

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Introduction

The discovery of metal changed human life where prehistoric men were using metals to make tools and weapons. Silver is valued as a precious metal and one of the rare elements on earth's crust. Silver is a white, soft and shiny metal, which can be shaped easily by hammering. Silver possesses the highest electrical conductivity of all metals even higher than copper and also has higher optical reflectivity than aluminium. Silver has numerous applications in various fields like air conditioning, water purification, dentistry, photography, electronics etc.

Indian women and jewelry are linked inherently. Whereas the history of Indian jewelry is as ancient as the country itself. There cannot be a single woman who doesn't admire minimum jewelry. Indian jewelry designs are very unique and purely depend on craftsmanship. In olden days the jewelry was handcrafted artistically out of natural's stuff like seeds, feathers, leaves, berries, fruits, flowers, animal bones, claws, teeth etc. Even today the different tribal communities use such eco-friendly jewelry. As time passes this natural stuff is replaced by metals. In India, jewelry is not only crafted for humans, but also for the Gods, ceremonial elephants, and horses. The art of jewelry making differs from place to place, for example, the gold jewelry of Tamil Nadu and Kerala is inspired by nature. Similarly, the Meenakari and Kundan jewelry making styles have been influenced by the Mughal dynasty.

Traditional tribal silver jewelry is quite rich in India and ethnic tribes have preserved the original format of jewelry design. When the whole country was taken over by the spirit of globalization it was the tribes of India who had preserved the ancient crafts and arts of India. Silver jewelry is not just for decoration but also serves a useful purpose. Women wear broad Kadas with cramped nail-like surfaces, which is a traditional design that provides safety from wild animals when they are in the forest for rearing cattle and gathering wood. Thoria (a stud) is said to be essential for acupuncture points, to ensure good health. The traditional silver jewelry is adorned by ethnic tribal communities to distinguish themselves from the other tribal communities, for example, Rabari people can be easily identified by observing their womenfolk, covered with long black head scrapes, heavy brass earrings and a magical tattoo on their neck and arms. There is a particular meaning for each jewel, for example, Vatla is a spiral necklace worn by Harijan women and Nagali, spring earrings are the sign of marriage.

Kutch is well known for its tradition and also famous for traditional silver jewelry and Kutch embroidery, which is famous all over the world. In 2001, the earthquake had a huge impact on Kachchi's silver craft. The workplaces and houses of silversmiths, silver traders, and the small kansara artisan community got destroyed and the major market for silver formed by the local communities was also disturbed by the disaster. For almost eighteen to twenty-four months, shops were closed because of the disaster and the artisans were left with no work. Then some changed their trade and turned to wage labour and some remained unemployed.

Mr. Mukeshbhai Pomal from Kutch is a renowned master craftsman who has experience of fifty years and got this unique skill from his ancestors. During the natural calamity, many craftsmen lost their houses and shops and Mr.

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details

Design Resource

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1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details

Mukesh is one of them. But later on, he decided not to leave this unique craft so he continued and also trained this traditional craft to his son and outsiders who were interested in learning. Artisan uses only silver and gold to achieve a traditional jewelry design. Artisan said that this traditional jewel is a very old craft and a particular community people were wearing these jewels.



Artisan is involved in making tiny bells which will later be soldered to the pendant.



Tiny silver balls are immersed in solution and then arranged carefully in a circular form by glancing the real design.



Centre area of the ring is being filled with bright yellow paint.

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1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details



Small bells are added to the back side of the pendant and it is soldered.



Silver article is being heated using gas burner.



Tiny silver rings are arranged and fused using hand gas burner.

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1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details



Compass is used to measure the Radius of the silver sheet.



Kutchi silver earrings are generally used by kutchi women.



Centre area of the Kutchi silver pendant is highlighted with blue paint.

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Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are used for traditional silver jewelry making are as follows:

- **Silver Sheet:** A basic material for traditional silver jewelry making.
- **Silver Wire:** It is for detailing the craft according to the required design.
- **Metal Sheet Cutter:** To cut the metal sheet.
- **Water-Soluble Flux Paste:** It is used to solder the metal pieces.
- **Enamel Paints:** To colour the traditional silver jewelry.
- **Hand Gas Burner:** To heat the metal.
- **Tamarind Water:** To wash the silver pendant.



Metal sheet cutter is used to cut the metal sheet into required size and shape.

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details

Design Resource

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/tools-and-raw-materials>

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details



Hammer is used to beat the silver pendant to get the bulged shape.



Brush is used to fill the center area of the pendant with enamel paints.



Compass is used to measure the radius of the sheet.

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1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details



Gas burner used to heat the silver article.



Scale is used for measuring the silver sheet.

Design Resource

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<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/tools-and-raw-materials>

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

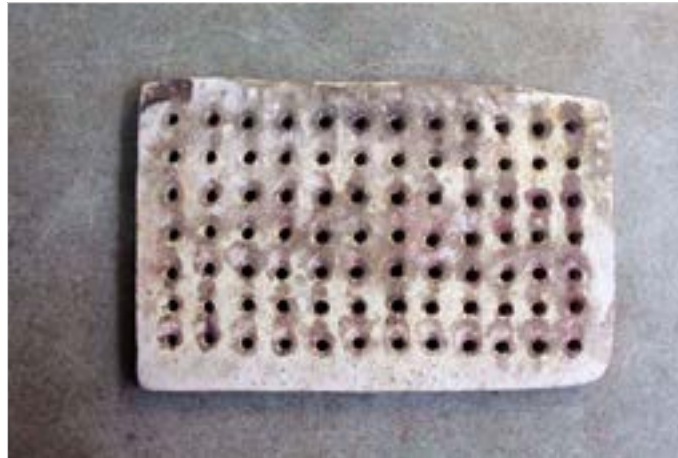
6. Contact Details



Flat solid iron surface is used while making silver jewelry.



This is used to make a round shaped silver balls in varied sizes.



Customized broad is used while heating silver articles using gas burner.



Water-soluble flux paste is used to solder the metal pieces.

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<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/tools-and-raw-materials>

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details



Silver wire for detailing the craft according to required design.



Brush is used to clean the silver article.



Silver sheet is the basic material used for traditional silver jewelry making.

Design Resource

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Silver Jewelry

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<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/making-process>

Making Process

Silver is the basic material for traditional silver jewelry making. Initially, the silver sheet is cut with the help of a metal sheet cutter according to the required size and design. Then the silver sheet is slightly heated to make it soft using a hand gas burner and marked with the metal compass. The silver wire is cut and bent to a round shape. Then the shaped silver wire is placed on the silver sheet by dipping the wire in solution (water-soluble flux paste and water) and heated so that the wire fused smartly with the sheet. Artisan checks whether there is an air gap or not. If there is any gap, the small silver pieces, which are dipped in flux solution, are placed in-between to fill the gap. Then small round shaped thin metal wires is arranged by following the actual design and again soldered.

The thin silver wire is cut into small pieces and dipped in a solution made of water and water-soluble flux paste. Then the small pieces are arranged in a row and fired with the hand gas burner so that the small silver sticks are converted into tiny silver balls. These tiny silver balls are immersed in the solution and then arranged carefully in a circular form by glancing at the real design. Then the article is again fired and cooled by sinking in normal water. The negative area around the design is removed cautiously with the help of a metal sheet cutter. After removing the unwanted metal, the sharp edges are smoothened by using filer. The designed article is embossed by hammering the customized impression tool on the article. Once finished with the embossing, flat round shaped silver wire is added at the center and fused with the article.

Artisan works with the detailing part and the clasp for the traditional silver pendant is attached by soldering. Whereas in the other hand small bells are made manually by heating the tiny silver pieces, which turn into a sphere shape and the hook, is attached to get a bell form and soldered to the silver pendant. Then the article is polished and washed with tamarind water. Enamelling is done neatly to give an ethnic look.

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details

Design Resource

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Silver Jewelry

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

MAKING PROCESS



1. Silver sheet is cut and marked with the metal compass.

2. Silver wire is cut and bent to a round shape.



3. Round shaped silver wire is fused smartly with the sheet.

4. The air gaps are filled with the small silver pieces.



5. Small round shaped thin silver wires are set by following the design and soldered.

6. Tiny silver balls are arranged carefully in a circular form and fused using hand gas burner.



7. The negative area around the design is removed cautiously and smoothened.

8. Designed article is embossed skillfully by hammering.



9. Clasp is attached to the silver pendant.

10. Small silver bells are attached to the pendant.



11. Silver pendant is polished and washed with the tamarind water.

12. Enameling the pendant to give an ethnic look.



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Silver sheet is cut into the required size and shape using a metal sheet cutter.



Silver pendant is being washed using Brush.



The silver wire is being cut and bent into required length.



The silver wire is being bent to a round shape.

Design Resource

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Silver ring is heated using hand gas burner.



Round shaped silver ring is placed over the silver sheet by dipping the ring in a water-soluble flux paste and water.



Silver ring is heated using burner so that the ring gets welded with the sheet.



Tiny rings are used to make intricate designs over the pendent.

Design Resource

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/making-process>

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details



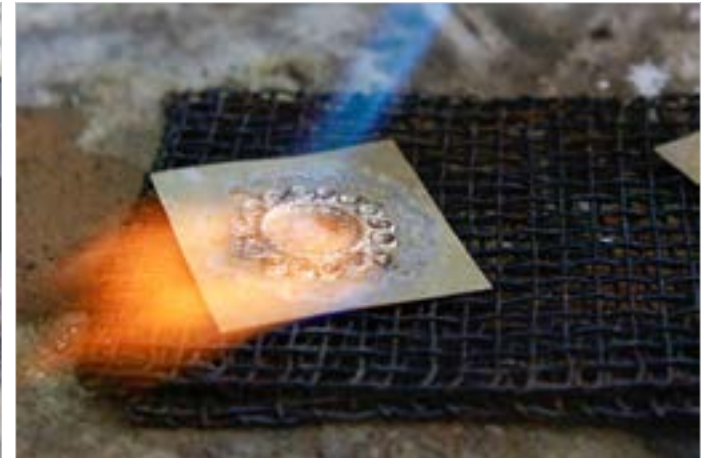
Small round shaped thin metal wires are arranged by following the actual design.



Silver sheet is being heated using gas burner.



These tiny silver balls are immersed in solution and then arranged carefully in a circular form by glancing the real design.



Article is fired and cooled by sinking in normal water.

Design Resource

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Silver ring is heated with burner and it placed over the sheet.

Small silver balls are made to create intricate designs on pendent.



The negative area around the design is removed cautiously with the help of metal sheet cutter.



After removing the unwanted metal, the sharp edges are smoothened by using filer.

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Article is being hammered to get a bulge shape.



Intricate designs are being made on the silver pendent.



Round shaped silver wire is being made to add to the centre of the pendent.



Flat round shaped silver wire is added at the center and fused with the article.

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Centre area of the pendent is then filled with the blue color.



Small bells are being made.



Small bells are attached to the back of pendent and soldered to the silver pendant.



Silver pendent is being washed using Brush.

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/products>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Products

From the prehistoric ages to the present day, the crafts of Indian jewelry made of precious metals are one of their kind in quality as well as beauty. Indian jewelries made of gold, silver, diamonds, precious and semi-precious stones are very adorable all over the world. Mr. Mukeshbhai Pomal from Kutch is a well-known artisan who has fifty years of experience in traditional jewelry making. The price for traditional silver jewelry starts from INR 100 to INR3000 thousand.



Tribal earring beautifully crafted are usually used by people of Gujarat as accessory.



Traditional Kutchi silver pendant is an accessory for Kutchi people.

Design Resource

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<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/products>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Accessory used by women of Banjara community.

Design Resource

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/products>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Ethnic silver accessories of Kutchi people which can be used as a pendant.



Intricately ornated Kutchi silver pendant.



Traditional 3 layered silver neck piece used by women of Banjara community.

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Traditional Silver Jewelry - Kutch, Gujarat

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<https://dsource.in/resource/traditional-silver-jewelry-kutch-gujarat/video>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Video



Traditional Silver Jewelry - Kutch, Gujarat

Design Resource

Traditional Silver Jewelry - Kutch, Gujarat

Silver Jewelry

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Contact Details

This documentation was done by Professor Bibhudutta Baral and Ranjitha M C at [NID, Bengaluru](#).

You can get in touch with him at [bibhudutta\[at\]nid.edu](mailto:bibhudutta[at]nid.edu)

You can write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

Key Contacts:

Amrith Silver Smith

Bhuj, Gujarat

Landphone: - 02832-653896

Helpdesk Details:

Co-ordinator

Project e-kalpa

R & D Campus

National Institute of Design

#12 HMT Link Road, Off Tumkur Road

Bengaluru 560 022

India

Phone: +91 80 2357 9054

Fax: +91 80 23373086

Email: [dsource.in\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:dsource.in[at]gmail.com)

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details