

# Indian Design

## A Contender on Global Markets

By Mary Keutgen Genoud

In the past decade, India's gem and jewelry industry has set a record for expansion with exports increasing by \$5 billion dollars between 1990 to 2000.



Colorful and trendy sapphire brooches with diamonds from Bapalal Keshavlal

The swift growth is attributed to two factors, demand for diamonds, which account for 80% of exports and demand in the U.S. for jewelry.

As Sanjay Kothari, CEO of the Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) puts it: "India has democratized diamonds." However, India may have democratized more than just diamonds, as jewelry designers gain the know-how and experience to challenge manufacturers worldwide. Highlighting this, jewelry exports have risen in the past decade by 270 percent!

Indian jewelry manufacturers enjoy a supportive government that has liberalized many laws in the past few years, such as the recent elimination of duty on rough diamonds (April 1, 2002), and the reduction of duty on 18 karat gold. Special geographic areas such as the SEEPZ in Mumbai also enjoy further liberalization.

Technology has played a significant role in the development of the jewelry industry and exports. As Mehul

Choksi of the Gitanjali Group, one of India's largest diamond and jewelry exporters explains, "The entire package from CAD-CAM to laser finishing is being used in India."

Yet, it was not until 1998 that India made its dazzling entry onto the global jewelry design stage, when four of the overall winners of the prestigious De Beers International Awards were won by Indian designers and again in 2000, when three Indian designers were among the De Beers' winners. One company that won both years the De Beers International Awards is Sama Jewellery of Mumbai, which was also part of the 'Diamonds are Forever' prestigious Vivaha Collection. ■

However, there are numerous factors contributing to India's overall success as Ritesh Mehta of Bapalal Keshavlal explained.

"In the late twentieth century, when the world grew more accessible and uniform thanks to Internet, there was an eruption of sharing in design ideas. Suddenly,