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# **THE HISTORY OF JEWELLERY CULTURE AMONG THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MUSLIMS OF TRAVANCORE**

**Sajeena Beevi A.**

*Research Scholar, Dept. of ICKS, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram*

**Dr. P. Nazeer**

*Supervising Teacher, Dept. of Islamic History,  
Mannaniya College of Arts & Science, University of Kerala*

**Received: Sep. 2018 Accepted: Oct. 2018 Published: Nov. 2018**

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**Abstract:** For a long time, archaeologists and historians have used the embedded signature of time sealed in jewelleries to reconstruct the past lives of communities the world over. As the kinds, the material used and the designs of jewelleries are not expected to use by everyone in the community or the society equally, a detailed investigation into the diverse aspects of the same will expose many hidden spaces of our yesteryears. The present is an attempt along similar lines to explore the unexplored socio-cultural life of Muslims in erstwhile Travancore during the nineteenth century. Considering the near absence of any scholarly papers on the same, it presents both an opportunity as well as a practical challenge to pursue the topic. Travancore had a prominent place in the ship routes carrying costly and extravagant commodities such as diamonds, gems, gold, and jewelleries due to its proximity to the South Asian trade channel through the Arabian and Indian Oceans. The region's master craftsmen created sterling jewelry without jeopardising the caste and other social orders that existed in society. The paper is exclusively looking into the influence of socio-cultural factors on the adornment practises of diverse Muslim communities in Travancore during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. To address the objectives, a qualitative research methodology is adopted along with detailed literature review.

**Keywords:** Travancore, History of Jewelleries, History of Muslims, Adornment Practices, Ornaments.

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**Introduction:** The history of ornamentation emerged from the cultural history of human beings itself. The search for ornamentation can be traced back to time immemorial, as evidenced by prehistoric sites. The cultural remains of every human habitation might include the remains of some kind of ornamentation, including jewelleries that they used in their lifetime. The history of ornamentation gradually as well as steadily evolved according to the development of metallurgy in each society. The availability of raw materials and other resources shaped the exclusive nature of them. Trade relationships also played a vital role in ensuring the spread of certain designs or the nature of wearing them. Jewelleries have a sacred space within the vast history of ornamentation. It is important to distinguish between ornaments and jewellery here. Ornaments are very general in nature, as they fit into any object used to decorate a place or an individual. But jewelleries are specifically designed ornaments made of precious stones, woods, and metals exclusively for decorating individuals, usually. Like ornaments, jewellery also reflects the economic and social status of individuals and societies.

Like elsewhere, the history of jewellery in India is as old as the history of civilization here. There are cultural relics in different parts of the country which bear testimony to the use of jewelleries from prehistoric, Indus Valley, Vedic, Maurya, Gupta, down to the Islamic and imperial periods, to satisfy their aesthetic and other requirements. There is historical evidence to show that a variety of jewelleries in gold, silver, brass and copper were used in the Indus Valley civilization. There were many fascinating stories recorded about jewellery and related aspects in India. During the Vedic period, possessions of diverse kinds of jewels were considered one among the four principal treasures, along with a herd of cows, staples of horses, and elephants. Jewellery making reflects societal expertise in craftsmanship, as its ornamentation describes the diversity of culture and aesthetic imagination of communities. When jewelleries expose the scientific expertise of the respective societies using them, the public wearing of

jewellers is a kind of declaration of the wealth, status, and power of the people (Mehrotra, 2004). Public exhibition of such ornaments during festivals was a universal habit of kings and emperors to impress their contemporaries. Regardless of their similarities or differences, all communities embraced the culture of making and wearing jewellery. Among them, Muslims have contributed immensely to its rich history. The present paper aims to give a glimpse into the history of jewellery culture among the Muslims of Travancore state in the 19th century.

**Background of the Study:** In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is the time period of concern in this paper, Travancore society was displayed as an asylum of caste problems (Srinivasan, 2015). Dress and jewellery, which are now used to decorate oneself, were used as a measuring rod for caste differences here (Houtart & Lemercinier, 1978). Caste being attached to the body remained invisible, but could be made visible through these symbols of dress, jewellery, hairstyle, names etc. The dressing code as the symbol of caste is well documented and popularised through several mediums (Sreebitha, 2018). Jewellery too had the same scope, like the dressing code, in a hierarchical society based on caste, whichever the religion was. Even though it is unlikely to compare castes in Islam to those in Hinduism because such a distinction is not defined technically in religious text books, an informal Muslim caste system existed in Kerala as part of the overall caste hierarchy (Mathur, 2011). The commonly used method of distinction among Muslims is the '*ashraf*' and '*ajlaf*' approach. The '*ashraf*' are Muslims of foreign lineage and the superior group, whereas the '*ajlaf*' are local converts and inferior (Ameerudheen, 2018). The third category is '*arzal*' and they are those Muslims who converted from the lowest strata of Hindu society (Ameerudheen, 2018). Similarly, there are various terms for different Muslim communities based on *Madhabs*, which is the Islamic jurisprudence in general, but specifically, it is the diversity in worshipping patterns, interpretation of the Holy Quran, etc. In Travancore, the major communities based on *Madhabs* were *Shafi* and *Hanafi*. The native converted Muslims were *Shafi*, and those Muslims who migrated from other parts of present India were *Hanafi*, *Mallicki*, etc. While the high caste could wear jewelleries made of precious metals and stones, the other lower castes had to be satisfied with beads of stone, bones, and other cheap items. Each community or caste had a separate jewellery culture as the identity object. Hence, like other religious communities, Muslims too used jewellery as per their caste ranking, beliefs, and economic capacity. So that tracing jewellery can speak loudly about the cultural peculiarities associated with each community as per time period.

The early settlements of Muslims in the Travancore region date back to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. They were also called '*Methan*' or '*Muhammadans*'. But according to religious scholars, *Methan* is not a collective term describing all Muslims of Travancore. According to them, only those Muslims who were converted from other religions in the region itself are called so. Compared to other regions, Muslims were few in number in Travancore and they settled mainly around Thengappattanam, Kulachal, Vizhinjam, Poonthura, etc. Those belonging to lower socio-economic ranks of other religions converted to Islam due to caste discrimination. Compared to Christianity, those in the lower castes of Hindus converted more to Islam. Even though Travancore is a Hindu nation, the elite Muslims received respect and status in society, and they had access to higher administrative positions too. Even those who converted from the Hindu religion to Islam received the right to wear gold ornaments, *kuppayam*, etc. There were 19,369 Muslims in Travancore according to the Travancore Census of 1816, which was 4.6% of the total population. Their number increased to 1,58,823 in 1891, which was 6.2% of the total population. It became 3,53,274 in the 1931 census. There were 453 mosques in the region in 1853. The presence of a mosque in a region exposes the rise in social and cultural incidence of Muslims in the locality.

**Statement of the Research Problem:** A man has an inbuilt passion for expressing his full potential in any form as a social being. The place of aesthetic expression in oneself is very important in the history of human beings. The habit of wearing jewellery has different meanings in one's life. Jewellery and the use patterns of jewellery may vary according to time and space. The uses of jewellery possess and express a cultural connotation also. It represents the trend of an age, a belief and a culture. For instance, pointing to the wealth possessed, there was a belief in the Mughal period that the glory of a prince was established by his buildings, library, and jewels. It is crucial to note here that the nobility designed

jewelleries to protect and enhance their royal status; hence the vertical hierarchy in contemporary societies, which is reflected in the entitlement to wear different kinds of jewelleries. On the other hand, individuals often express their social relations through tattoos, jewelleries, clothes, and others (Miller 2010, Durkheim 1980). In primitive societies, people were always required to reveal their loyalty to their own kin. They used their wearables to declare this cohesion. Simultaneously, it helped to distinguish one from other kinships and within kinship (Durkheim 1980).

As said above, there existed feudal and pre-capitalised systems of ornamentation in Travancore. It was highly caste based, class based as well as communal based hierarchy in nature. The present paper is an attempt to look into the influence of sect on costumes or ornamentation among Travancore Muslims. Here, sect refers to diverse Muslim groups, namely Pattanis, Rawthers, Marakkars, etc. These are not caste names but originated in relation to various occupational identities. Compared to other states elsewhere like Cochin and Malabar, Travancore was highly hierarchical in her general caste based nature, which was reflected in the Muslim community to an extent. It was very much evident in the culture of costumes and ornamentation too. Religious diversity and caste hierarchy were reminiscent of the ornamentation of the different sections of society. Ornamentation is considered as a symbol of identity, dignity, and prestige. The ornamentation of Muslims in Travancore was very peculiar, which distinguishes their appearance from that of the other communities (Bhaskaranunni, ...). The Muslims in the region were mainly from the low castes of converted people. They must adhere to their own dress code in accordance with the religious symbol. Naturally, there were some constraints, rules, and regulations regarding what to wear in terms of dress and ornaments. Here, the researcher is attempting to map out all these contested contours between social status and ornamentation practises that existed among Muslims of Travancore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Objectives and Research Questions:** On the basis of the above observations based on existing but limited literature, the researchers are making the following objectives and associated research questions. They are

- To connect the symbolism of the jewellery within the caste divisions in Travancore.  
The research questions associated with this major objective are
  1. What were the jewellery and adornment practises of different Muslim communities in general in Travancore during the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
- To investigate the impact of sect on Travancore Muslims' costumes or ornamentation.  
The research questions associated with this major objective are
  1. What are the socio-cultural factors that influenced the culture of ornamentation among the Muslims in the State of Travancore during the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

**Literature Review:** Jewellery has a social representation. For men, it is a declaration of power and richness, and for women, it is a symbol of subjugation as well as an expression of beauty. In other sense, since primitive days, jewelleries were used for decorating body where clear distinction was kept between male and female (Dwivedi, 2016). Jewellery helps to better rank in the social hierarchy (Prior & Adamson, 2004) and is a symbol of religious loyalty (Prior & Adamson, 2004). Some scholars have the opinion that tracing the history of jewellery in general and Indian jewellery in particular is a challenge due to the styles and designs of each piece being transformed continuously (Chellam, 2018; Untracht, 1997). However, tracing the literature about the same does not give a bright picture, as the studies on this subject are limited more or less to the present commercial aspects of jewellery. Still, there were some studies as part of the cultural history of diverse societies, but they too hardly refer to the social hierarchies of jewellery. But there were some scholarly anthropological studies on symbolic objects, like jewelleries, in establishing the identity of clans (Durkheim, 1912). Jewellery's labelled power is what makes it relevant in social relations (Mauss, 1990).

The culture of ornamentation and the making of jewellery is diversified from culture to culture. There have been studies on various forms of jewellery in various societies' traditions (Dwivedi, 2016; Khalid, 2015; Prior & Adamson, 2004; Stronge, Poovaya-Smith, & Harle, 1988). They document the traditional diversity in adornment practises among societies. The role of jewellery in making memories and social

connections has been discussed by scholars (Ahde-Deal, 2013). Similarly, the role of jewellery in social cohesion has been discussed theoretically (Miller 2010; Durkheim 1980). There were studies about the cultural association of ornamentation and the making of jewellery in India. There were also studies on the aesthetical aspects of the jewellery culture of India (Dwivedi 2016; Lakshmi, 2013). Till the last century, South India had a natural monopoly on diamonds and germs. These studies exposed the religious aspects of jewellery in our tradition. Some scholars have investigated the origin of ornamentation in general (Khalid, 2015). The importance of studying various aspects of ornamentation and jewellery was traced in elaborated details (Khalid, 2015; Bini, 2009; Krishnan & Kumar, 1999) and the strong connections between ornaments and jewellery in the reconstruction of the historical past.

The first reference of Muslim association with jewellery was given by Abdul Al Fazal Baghi about Ghaznavide dynasty (Khalid, 2015). Considering the presence and participation of Muslims in the socio-cultural and economic activities of India, the influence of jewellery on their individual and collective lives cannot be minimal. During the reigns of the Mughal emperors Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, goldsmiths created magnificent jewelleries that represent the pinnacle of contemporary Islamic art (Stronge, 2010). Similarly, Muslims have actively participated in the diverse fields of society for a long time (Sajeena, 2017). There are observations about the diversity of the Muslim community in the Travancore region (Mateer, 1883).

**Theoretical Framework:** Until recently, popular schools of thought held that the hierarchically lower caste communities in either religion or region never incorporated or understood power relations or their instruments. This is fundamentally a historical approach that emerged from the concept of western modernity, which states that Europeans are the only model of human civilization, whereas the natives of any land outside Europe are neither civilised nor able to realise the historical and political forces of the time. This philosophical concept was deeply influenced by later historians, who made similar observations in their studies about Indian subjects too. But recent research using subaltern tools and dialectical materialism brought out the fallacies of this approach and exposed the constructive opposition expressed by the downtrodden against the vertical hierarchy that existed everywhere. The natives of Travancore, whichever religion they belonged to, were not passive recipients of historical events of the time but actively participated in them. In the existing social order of 19<sup>th</sup> century Travancore, they continuously struggled and amassed social respect and political presence against the oppressive British rule. Even among the native community, the downtrodden continuously and consistently challenged caste hierarchy and its associated social discrimination. They expressed it in various forms, like art, literature, folksongs, violent struggles, etc. The Muslims of Travancore were not different; more than that, they exemplified unusual strength and maturity in expressing their agreement as well as dissent. We place the present study in the context of the above discussed.

**Methodology and Data Source:** The historical analysis will involve an intense focus on unearthing primary data. As this study tries to understand the jewellery and ornamentation culture of Travancore Muslims in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it needs to deal with the complex historical processes and demands a precise and substantial description. Concerning the objectives, the study will entail a qualitative research strategy. Along with the available literature, we also used methods like interviews and desk review of official secondary documents. Field visits to the area of struggle helped to gather much local, informal and contradictory information about the same. We study the topic in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century Travancore with its political, social and economic diversities. It also uses narratives in folksongs and cultural forms as a source of historical reference.

In order to collect data about the history of jewellery and adornment practises among Travancore Muslims in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we employed multiple methods like literature search, oral testimony collection, visits to ethnographic collections in virtual and real museums, and visits to areas settled by ethnic Muslim communities in Varkkala, Chirayilkkezhu, Pallickal, Kayamkulam, Chaganassery, Punaloor, Neyyatinkara, Kollam, and Thengappattanam. We conducted interviews with elder goldsmiths in the region. By visiting their residential places, we were able to collect more local folk tales related to social distinctions practised till recently (some of them even now) in the region related to

jewelleries. We were able to collect photographs of some traditional jewelleries during these visits. Simultaneously, we were able to record the various tools of jewellery making and sketches of diverse and distinctive ornaments used by different communities. We also collected data from elderly people in the community who are residing in different places which is mentioned above. Along with all these, a detailed desk interview of existing literature was conducted in order to reach conclusions.

**Analysis and Findings:** The present analysis showed that there was diversity in the jewellery worn according to differences in community identity. More than a social norm, it was a socio-political rule which was evidenced by the Royal Proclamation of 1818. This also shows the growth of state power over social hierarchies and customs of the time. According to this proclamation, then Regent Rani Parvathibhai abolished the *Adiyara* and stated that men and women of *Nair*, *Ezhava*, *Channar*, and *Mukkuva* castes were permitted to use ornaments of gold and silver according to their *Jathimaryada* or the norms pertaining to their respective castes without having to pay the *Adiyara*. *Adiyara* was a kind of tax for receiving the sanction to wear gold and other expensive jewelleries in the state of Travancore. But it did not grant this right to *Paraya*, *Pulaya*, and many other castes that were at the bottom of this caste ridden society. Considering the limitation of religious conversion from Hinduism to Islam as it carries the caste identity along with, local Islamic customs somehow control the jewellery adornment practices of Muslims in the Travancore. The presence of unique jewelleries in the region may be an attempt to address and overcome these above restrictions.

The Muslims of Travancore were not a homogenous community. They differ from each other in dressing styles, food habits, medium of communication, marriage ceremonies, and generally in many customs of social and private life. As they belong to different layers of social mobility and economic power, marital relationships are almost absent among them. The kinds of Muslims in Travancore in the nineteenth century based on their origin were *Hanafi*, *Shafi* and *Mallicki*. *Mallicki* (and *Hambali*) migrated from the Deccan and North India, whereas *Hanafi* migrated from present-day Tamil Nadu. *Shafi* represents the native Muslims. *Methans* were *Shafi*, whereas *Ravuthar*, *Labba*, and *Maraikars* were *Hanafi*. *Mallicki* were the *Pattans* and *Kachi Memon*, respectively. Among them, *Ravuthars* migrated, particularly from the present day Trichy area of Tamil Nadu, for occupations like horsemen and soldiers, whereas *Labbas* migrated from Tamil Nadu for trade related occupations (Mateer, 1883). *Maraikars* migrated from Tamil Nadu for trade-related occupations (Mateer, 1883). But *Pattans* migrated from Hyderabad and other northern parts of India to join soldiers (Mateer, 1883). *Kachi Memon* migrated from Gujarath for trade-related occupations, and finally, *Methar* or *Methan* were converted Muslims from the region itself (Mateer, 1883). These sects reflect the origin of the region rather than the hierarchical social status of its people.

The Muslims in Travancore had their own traditional ornaments which they preserved over generations both as a wealth and prestige which together reflected the social identity of the holders. The foreign travelogues present a comprehensible depiction of the jewellery and adornment practises of Muslim women in Kerala, including parts of Travancore. The Dutch representative in the southern part of Kerala, Nieuhoff, had narrated that the Muslims were enjoying a rich life in the region and their women used to wear plenty of ornaments and dresses. They wore unique ornaments which had similarities with Arabs. It could be the influence of the greater Arab trade of the time. Colachal, Thengappatanam and Kollam were major ports of the time. As Arabs kept a flourishing relationship with Muslims here, such a similarity in ornaments is very possible. Samuel Matier had recorded that the Muslim women of Travancore used colourful dresses and jewelleries (Mateer, 1883).

**Adornment Practices using Jewelleries among Muslims in Travancore:** There was cultural diversity in jewellery practises among Muslims. The differences in communities were reflected partially in jewelleries too. Various factors influenced this cultural diversity among diverse Muslim groups in Travancore, like social status, economic power, trade influence, craftsmanship, availability of materials required, and others. Here we are explaining the jewellery adornment practises of Muslims in Travancore based on their diverse sects.

The native Methans used *Vazhakkoomp Kamal*, *Kasavuthattam Kamal*, *Arippa Kamal*, *Thoda*, *Jimukki*, *Matti*, *Meenmurisu*, *Koppu*, *Toonkal*, *Alikkatu* (there is an argument that *Alikkatu* was another name of *Chittu*) and *Clawar* as ear ornaments. Among them, except for *Thoda*, *Jimukki*, *Matti*, and *Meenmurisu*, all others were strictly made of gold only. The others were made both in gold and silver. *Vazhakkoomp Kamal* and *Kasavuthattam Kamal* were large in size compared to others and were used only by aristocratic women. *Meenmurisu* is worn only by married women. The neck ornaments used by native *Methans* are equally diverse. *Kara*, *Erikkalam Mala* (*Erikkalathin Mala*), *Mullamottu Mala*, *Kashu Mala*, *Mangapinchu Mala*, *Kurumulaku Mala*, *Thali*, *Muram Thali*, *Talippottu* and *Pookkulakani* were notable among them. *Kara* was again divided into *Chakkamullu Kara* and *Ozhukkan (Olukkan) Kara*. Most of these ornaments derived their names from the shapes of fruits and spices that they tried to demonstrate. Among them, *Chakkamullu Kara*, *Erikkalam Mala*, *Mullamottu Mala*, *Kashu Mala*, *Kurumulaku Mala*, *Muram Thali*, *Talippottu*, and *Pookkulakani* were made only in gold, whereas *Ozhukkan Kara*, and *Mangapinchu Mala* were made in silver too. *Kara* was compulsory for brides, and *Thali* was the marriage badge worn by the bride. *Erikkalam Mala*, *Thalippottu*, and *Kurumulaku Mala* were used only by married women. *Pookkulakani* was used only on festive occasions. *Kashumala* made in silver was used by other communities too. *Kashu Mala* and *Thalippottu* were particularly used as status symbols. *Kappu* and *Urullan Vala* which were the hand ornaments used by *Methans*. The *Kappu* was a wrist ornament. They were of different types, like *Pasana*, *Nannukku*, and *Tottukappu* based on their shape. *Muriyan Kappu*, *Ozhukkan Kappu* and *Panikappu* were the three different kinds of *Kappu* based on design. *Kappu* is generally made out of gold. The two waist ornaments used by *Methans* were *Padiyaranjanam* and *Koompayaranjanam*. Both of them were in silver. Fetishes made in brass and silver were used along with the above. These fetishes were mainly related to worship. The *Mangapinch* anklet, made of silver was the most popular one used. Among the rings, the *tala* was the notable one. Rich women also used stone rings.

Now let us discuss the ornaments used by *Hanafi* Muslims. *Ravuthers* used *Mangapinchu Mala*, *Viruri Mala* (*Viri Vilippu*), *Alakkathali* (*Elakkathali*), *Kurumulaku Mala*, *Mullamala*, *Pazhuthara Mala*, *Karishumani Mala*, and *Avllum Maniyum* were neck ornaments. Among them, *Viruri Mala* was used by aristocratic families only. Among them, *Viruri Mala*, *Alakkathali*, *Pazhuthara Mala*, and *Avllum Maniyum* were made of gold. *Piyantravum Maniyum* (*Pooshanthravum Maniyum*) was the golden badge attached to *Karishumani Mala*. Like *Methans*, it was worn by the *Ravuthar* bride as a marriage badge. This ornament particularly shows the economic status of the person, as "*mani*" denotes the number of pendants attached, which varies from five to seven. *Cimukka Kamal*, *Thattukutchi*, *Swarnavali*, *Chandravattam*, *Matti* and *Ramukutchi* were the different ear ornaments used by different *Hanafi* communities. Among them, *Swarnavali* is the same as *Alikkathu*, and *Ramukutchi* was the same as *Meenmurisu* of the *Shafi* Muslims. *Swarnavali* was made both in gold and silver where others were made only in gold. The design of *Matti* was common for both *Shafi* and *Hanafi*. In the case of bangles, *Hanafi* used *Kappu* and particularly its two varieties, namely *Muriyankappu* and *Paniyankappu*. They used *Padiyaranjanam* (like *Shafi*) and *Ottiyanam*, which were made in silver as waist ornaments. As nose ornaments, they used *Mukkuthi* and *Mukkuvali*. *Mukkuthi* was made only in gold, whereas the other was made both in gold and silver. *Mukkuvali* was used only by married women, as it was removed after the death of their husband. Along with the above, they also used anklets and *Monjiyam*, which were made out of silver only. *Monjiyam* was the five rings worn on the legs' five fingers. The *Pattans* used *Thali* and *Gulsar* as neck ornaments. *Gulsar* was a *Karishumani Mala*, attached to a necklace of crescents and stars. They also used *Lacha*, which was a *Karishumani Mala* attached with gold rings.

It is interesting to look into the occasions for wearing the jewellery in that time period. Certain jewellerys were used only on particular occasions, whereas some were used throughout a lifetime. From the primary investigation, it was revealed that Muslims used to wear such jewellerys on all possible occasions. Marriages and religious festivals were the prime locations of their exhibition. Like today, people, irrespective of their background, used to show off their jewellerys and clothes to gather maximum social and cultural status. Similarly, all those functions where people from outside the immediate family gather, like grain initiation, *Sunnah*, or baptism, were used for displaying jewellery by all people in general. Festivals related to religions and pilgrimage also provided opportunities to show

one's expensive or prestigious collection of jewellery. As carnivals were organised around these festivals, they attracted a large number of people from all communities, irrespective of their hierarchical social status, even from distant regions. On ordinary occasions, only the most affluent people, including Muslims, wore jewels. In general, people of all communities, including those of Muslims, never missed any opportunity to show off their valuable jewellery to others in the region of Travancore. However, it should not be overlooked that there were social norms or *Jathimaryada* in the region regarding the keeping and use of jewellery.

**Influence of Socio-cultural Factors on the Ornament Practices among Muslims in the Travancore:** Both external and internal factors in the socio-economic and cultural spectrum have had a huge impact on jewellery making and on the adornment practises of Travancore Muslims. There were many factors that influenced the ornamentation culture among the Muslims of Travancore. The geographical position of the region, which lies on the international sea route connecting the empires of the east and the west, the Travancore was always exposed to travelers, traders, and to whatever they brought with them (Malekandathil, 2013). As a result, the people of Travancore were continuously and consistently exposed to various cultures in the contemporary period. Trade and travel made for a highly mobilised society there. So, Travancore was not only exposed to diverse commodities and their markets across the seas, but also to ideas, literature, fashion, and others. As Muslims were actively participating in trade and commerce, they were very much exposed to these new developments happening in other societies. The external influence was very dominant in the coastal regions of Travancore, particularly in the port towns like Kollam, Kayamkkulam, Alappuzha, Thengappattanam and others. Muslims had a considerable presence in the social and economic space of these areas. The skilled personnel among them attempted to reproduce whatever they came across in the other cultures as much as possible. Along with that, the master craftsmen designed and produced jewellery and other ornaments which were very close to their counterparts elsewhere. This enriched the cultural practises of Travancore immensely.

Among the social factors that influenced the jewellery culture, the most prominent was the hierarchical position of each sect in society. As mentioned before, converted Muslims were expected to follow their previous caste positions not as a binding rule but as a social custom. In the case of gender, women used more jewels both in private and public spaces than Muslim men. Compared to the Hindu community, less jewellery was used by Muslim males. The economic environment of the country is also important to consider here. The second half of nineteenth century witnessed the industrial revolution of Travancore which led to faster economic growth (Prakash, 2018). The missionaries, with the support of the state administration, established educational institutions, particularly for downtrodden communities. The time also witnessed structural changes in the agriculture sector as cash crops like rubber, tea, and tapioca were introduced. The impact of economic development in the urban regions was not reflected equally in the interior villages. Land reforms were not implemented in Travancore like in other parts of British India; hence the expected benefits of the capitalistic mode of agricultural development were also absent in the region. So there was an unequal pattern of growth and distribution of income among the people of Travancore, including those among Muslims.

As mentioned before, jewellery making is a complex technological activity which needs both artistic sense and scientific expertise in metallurgy. The kinds of jewellery used by Muslims show the quality of designers and goldsmiths (mostly both are the same person only) among Muslims, as each community had their own goldsmiths in those days. As different kinds of metal like gold, silver, diamonds or others require different kinds of craftsmanship, this culture of jewellery exposes the technological leap reached by Travancore society in general. Similarly, the kind of metal used and the quality of the craft of a piece of jewellery reflect the economic status of the individuals who consume it. Diamonds and gold were used only by the rich. So only those big Muslim traders who do large-scale business have the financial capacity to consume them. Even landowners, farmers, and government employees are less likely to have them. As they are among the upper middle class, they are likely to have more silver jewels, with or without a few gold ones. The lower middle class generally used lead and brass varieties of jewels. The poor hardly used any metallic ornaments, instead using thread, flowers, etc.

**Limitations of the Study:** The present study exposed the socio-economic hierarchical status and the related accessibility of Muslims of Travancore to jewellery. But the study is more focused on the vertical accessibility of adornment practises without considering its parallel accessibility equally. Similarly, the influence of trade on the local practises of designing and wearing of jewellery among Muslims of the region is not seriously addressed here. The impact of internal adornment practises of Muslims who migrated from other regions to Travancore is also not dealt with adequately here. The details of goldsmiths who made their jewellery for Muslims are also very small in the paper. Another limitation of the paper is on the issue of balancing the findings and the other related details. The researcher is providing more information about Methans and other communities are getting marginalised in the course of discussion. The paper does not address whether gender inequalities exist among the subjects or not.

**Conclusion:** Like all other communities, there was unique jewellery for different cultural activities among Muslims too. They had distinguishable ornaments and a style of wearing them for different occasions. The range of ornaments worn by an affordable Muslim woman ranged from rings and necklaces to hairpins and earplugs. They used jewellery made with precious, semiprecious and non-precious stones. The design and workmanship of these ornaments shows the expertise of the craftsmanship as different metals require different kinds of technological leap. The different tools that are used for construction also reflect the expertise of the manufacturers. Muslims in Travancore used jewellery for aesthetic purposes. They used it for ornamenting horses in ceremonial occasions like marriage. Rich families patronise such craftsmen as it involves a matter of prestige. Geography, culture, trade, lifestyle, affordability, availability of raw materials, craftsmen's expertise, and other factors influenced ornamentation and jewellery making. Ornaments were a must-wear for women on special occasions like festivals and weddings, and they were ethnic as well as fashionable. Hence, the present paper argues that in Travancore, the ornaments used by different communities, even among Muslims, were distinguishable from one another (like dress code). Their ornament practises were influenced by religion and caste in particular, as well as gender, economic status, employment, and geographical region in general. Each community had its own traditional ornaments which were not usually worn by other groups.

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