

Nirupa Bhatt, Managing Director,  
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# Gemstone Labs and Education Boom as Industry Grows



By Preeta Agarwal



Graduating  
students from  
GIA with their  
certificates



A GIA gemstone  
collection.

Regal jewelry has always been associated with India from the times of the Maharajas and Maharanis. These ornate beautiful pieces set with high-quality gemstones and diamonds are part of many international museums today.

But it was only in the last decade of 20th century, when India adapted technology and intricate machinery, that India started becoming a jewelry hub. Today, India is an important center for all things jewelry, from the cutting and polishing of diamonds and colored gemstones to manufacturing jewelry from the mass market to couture items. And with this evolution of the country's gems and jewelry industry, came the requirement for gemstone and diamond grading labs and high-level education.

## The Business of Certification

Sending diamonds and gemstones overseas for certification incurs costs and business delays. But, with global establishments like the GIA and IGI coming to India and setting up institutes in the country, securing grading certificates has become faster, less expensive and secure.

"The GIA's mission is to ensure public trust and confidence in gems and jewelry," says Nirupa Bhatt, Managing Director, GIA – India & Middle-East. "To achieve this, the GIA has established educational and grading facilities in important gem and jewelry centers and consumer markets globally. India is the largest diamond cutting center so, when the GIA decided

to expand globally, India was one of the important locations to consider," she added.

The extensive marketing campaigns led by the GIA regarding grading reports for diamonds and gemstones, as well as jewelry education, helped business at Indian laboratories and education centers that were already in operation – and even assisted new ones to mushroom in important cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Surat and Jaipur.

Although colored gemstones have been an integral part of Indian jewelry for centuries, the business was mostly based on trust and experience. Certification and education arrived with the turn of the millennium, but that was mostly for diamonds due to international generic promotion by De Beers and later, with its Forevermark brand.

It is only with the education imparted by companies such as GIA and Gemfields that colored gemstones received the limelight they deserved. Today, there are fully-fledged gemstone certification services available along with others such as personalized laser inscription. But it will still take some

time for consumers to be educated about colored gemstone certification before they start enquiring about it.

## Imparting Education

For people looking to build a career in gems and jewelry, the GIA in the United States was the preferred destination. But when the IGI came to Mumbai in 1999 and the GIA in 2004, this dream became more accessible to Indian jewelers and young people wanting to enter the industry. The GIA has also actively partnered with various other Indian institutes to reach more cities and impart short-term courses.

"In the past five years, we have conducted classes in over 100 locations in India offering various courses ranging from



Microscope cleaning at the GIA's grading room.



A view of the GIA's Mumbai  
office at Trade Centre.

A rough and a polished emerald.  
Photo: Thomas M. Schneider for the GIA.



A rough and a polished  
rubellite (tourmaline).  
Photo: Thomas  
M. Schneider for GIA.

one day to six months," states the GIA's Nirupa. "Furthermore, we offer free knowledge seminars at many trade and consumer shows across the country including tier II and tier III cities. From the manufacturing units of Surat and Coimbatore to the diamond houses of Mumbai, and from the retail hubs of Jaipur and Chennai to the luxury boutiques of New Delhi and Bengaluru, the GIA has helped shape and grow one of India's leading export and consumer industries."

India also has its own specialized gem labs and gemology and jewelry design institutes, with the oldest one being the Indian Institute of Gems and Jewellery (IIGJ - Mumbai & Jaipur) which was established in 1986. The list continues with the Indian Institute of Gemology (IIG - Delhi), the Indian Diamond Institute (IDI - Surat), the Gemological Institute of India (GII - Mumbai), the Gem Testing Laboratory (GTL - Jaipur) and many more. A few of these institutes are also affiliated with the Gem and Jewelry Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) of India.

A few Indian fashion and design colleges like the National Institute of Design (NID - Ahmedabad), the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT - Pan India), the Pearl Academy (Jaipur), the Vogue Institute of Fashion Technology (Bengaluru), the Arch Academy of Design (Jaipur) and the SNDT Women's University (Mumbai) have also started offering jewelry design courses with gemology as an integral part, for undergraduate and post-graduate students.

Four courses are mostly taught at the institutes: diamond grading, gemstone grading, jewelry design and jewelry manufacturing. Some of the other courses being provided are pearl grading, CAD/CAM and retail training, while among the latest are merchandising since the last decade has increasingly seen the growth of merchandising as a full-time job.

Meanwhile, many customers who are passionate about jewelry are interested in learning about the world of jewelry in order to make better decisions while buying; they usually choose short-term courses lasting one to two weeks.

Bhatt says that diamond and jewelry courses are more in demand, but gemstone courses are now increasingly becoming popular.

"Indian festive attire is very colorful, and colored gemstones offer perfect opportunities to enhance their celebrations," Bhatt commented. "The GIA has trained over 15,000 professionals in India, and the demand to understand gemstones is increasing as news of production of synthetics and enhancement of gemstones with treatments rises," she adds.

One very interesting fact that comes to forefront is that earlier most jewelers came into the business because of family lineage and learned skills on the job with their fathers. With the arrival of international institutes and better facilities at Indian institutes, the next generation of jewelers is eager to refine its knowledge at these colleges along with on-the-job learning. In addition, it has given opportunities to a whole new range of jewelers who are educated, talented, have fresh ideas and have build a career in gems and jewelry based on their passion and not the family business. ♦



ICA advances and promotes the awareness and appreciation of colored gemstones

## Pavilions Around the World



**International Jewelry Tokyo (IJT)**  
Tokyo, Japan- January

**GJX Gem & Jewelry Exchange (GJX)**  
Tucson, USA- February

**HK Int'l Diamond, Gem & Pearl Show (HKIDGPS)**  
Hong Kong- March

**Beijing International Jewelry Fair**  
China – April



**China (Changsha) Mineral & Gem Show (CMGS)**  
Changsha, China- May

**Jewelry Shanghai**  
Shanghai, China- May

**June HK Jewelry & Gem Fair (6JGHK)**  
Hong Kong- June

**Beijing Int'l Jewelry Fair (BIJF)**  
Beijing, China- July



**Japan Jewelry Fair (JJF)**  
Tokyo, Japan- August

**September HK Jewelry & Gem Fair (9JGHK)**  
Hong Kong- September

**China Int'l Jewelry Fair (CIJF)**  
Beijing, China- November

**HK Int'l Jewelry Manufacturers' Show (HKIJMS)**  
Hong Kong- November

Find out how to participate in the ICA pavilion, contact  
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