

Inspiring Conversations with Jinal Sampat of Sampat Jewellers

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Today we'd like to introduce you to Jinal Sampat.

Hi Jinal, so excited to have you on the platform. So before we get into questions about your work-life, maybe you can bring our readers up to speed on your story and how you got to where you are today?

I love design. Creating design concepts makes me happy. In graduate school, I studied landscape architecture from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). After graduation, I had an opportunity to combine my father-in-law's experience in the diamond jewelry industry with my design knowledge. When I launched my business, Sampat Jewellers, in the USA, I realized that women living a western lifestyle were not able to wear their mangalsutra, an Indian wedding chain. Since mangalsutra designs are traditional, women did not feel comfortable wearing a pair of jeans or western dress and their mangalsutra at the same time. Mangalsutra is a symbol of marriage in many Indian cultures.

Thus not being able to wear a piece of jewelry that symbolized their marriage was unfortunate. I decided to take this on as a design challenge and create modern mangalsutra design options while keeping the cultural aspects intact. Traditional mangalsutras are only worn on special occasions such as weddings or Indian holidays. For the rest of the year, they are stored in the bank safe. I wanted to change this practice. As of today, I've been able to design and create more than two dozen original modern diamond mangalsutra designs which does not include many product variations options available for each design. It warms my heart when I see a woman enjoying her modern mangalsutra while hanging out at the beach in her swimsuit with her significant other.

I'm sure you wouldn't say it's been obstacle free, but so far would you say the journey have been a fairly smooth road?

My husband tells me that human life is full of suffering. Jokes aside, launching and managing a business is not for the faint heart. It is a rewarding journey if you can put in the work. I've faced quite a few challenges along the way and continue to face new ones everyday. I'll share three challenges, which I hope will inspire others to reflect upon their own life and business. The jewelry market, which includes fine diamond jewelry, is an extremely saturated industry.



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It took me a few years of trial and error to understand the market need and the problem that I could help solve. Initially, I used to sell gold coins and have large revenue numbers with little or no profit. We're talking about a \$15 margin on a \$1900 gold coin. This approach by no means would allow me to earn a living wage unless I was selling hundreds or thousands of gold coins every month.

Since I am working with my father-in-law, I have respect for him as a loving member of our family. At the same time, it has been important for me to create boundaries when it comes to business decisions and discussions. This is when I inserted my husband to be the problem solver/ project manager. My husband continues to help me navigate difficult discussions with his father while ensuring we are enjoying a happy family life. Diamond industry is heavily male-centric. For example, even today, women are not allowed to enter some diamond trading offices in Mumbai. Working through this challenge is still a work in progress for me.

We've been impressed with Sampat Jewellers Inc., but for folks who might not be as familiar, what can you share with them about what you do and what sets you apart from others?

I design modern Indian jewelry and specialize in diamond mangalsutra designs for women.

It makes me happy when women choose to flaunt their mangalsutras with their western wear. Let's imagine there is an X-Y chart. The X-axis is for quality and Y-axis is for design. I see my work in the top right-hand corner, which is excellent quality and excellent design. This is what sets us apart from other fine jewelry brands. For some brands, quality is simply meeting the minimum specs. As an example, you can purchase a diamond that meets the Gemological Institute of America's (GIA) Cut, Carat, Clarity, and Color standards, popularly known as the 4C's. But almost no one goes beyond the specification and talks about the maximum amount of diamond sparkle and brilliance. Simply stated, two diamonds with identical specs can have a different look and feel. When it comes to design, we can limit our imagination to what we see on the internet or what our friends told us. But I like to take my clients on a journey and create designs that they didn't even imagine. The purpose of design is to change someone's life for the better and I take this job very seriously.

What sort of changes are you expecting over the next 5-10 years?

I believe virtual reality (VR) will change how people buy jewelry. VR will enable people to get an in-store experience and try out pieces from the comfort of their homes. Aside from the technological advancements, people are more likely to purchase sustainable and quality pieces.

If you look at your wardrobe, you'll notice that you keep wearing the same 20% of the clothes again and again. The same is happening with fine jewelry. People want to own fewer pieces of fine jewelry that they can enjoy during their lifetime and pass it on to future generations.

