Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Thewa is a special art of jewelry making that originates around 350 years back from the royal heavens of Rajasthan’s princely state of Pratapgarh. It is a traditional art that involves the process of craft fully fusing 23K gold with multicoloured Belgium glass.

The unique craft of thewa dates back to the Mughal era which is believed to be approximately 350 years old. This craft was invented and introduced to the world by Shri Nathu Raj Soni, who was the goldsmith for the then royal family of the princely state of Pratapgarh. Ever since then this craft has been part of the same family lineage and has never been practiced outside of it. This unique craft demonstrates meticulously performed delicate fusion of a 23k gold sheet of 40 gauge, onto a transparent colored glass.

This is the only ancient craft of authentic Indian origin, whose craftsmen/practitioners have claimed the maximum number of national and international awards and are still counting. The family also holds a Limca book record for the same reason. This craft also claims a postal stamp awarded to it by the government of India.

Thewa jewelry was also acknowledged by the Mughal Dynasty in 17th century and it was very popular amongst many royal clans and their courts men. There are in total
of only 14 families of this lineage that practice this craft today and have even kept it secret from their wife’s, daughters and daughter in laws. This is apparently the only jewelry type which uses 23k purity of gold in making and was even gifted by the government of INDIA to Prince Charles on the occasion of marriage as a memento. And some of the masterpieces can still be seen in personal collection of Queen Elizabeth and British museums.

Despite all such achievements and acclaims possessed by this craft that involves a very intricate and delicate work performed by specially groomed tools carving out designs and patterns that revolve around events and stories of heroism love tradition and religion and shares its origin along with the prestigious and world famous craft of kundan meena and meenakari yet is considered as a languishing craft.

1.2 Significance of Study

India has a rich tradition of crafts across the nation, with each area having its own socio-cultural identity. However, over the period of time due rapid changes in demographic of the society within India and as well as demand across the world has proved a challenge to the historic and ancient crafts which remain rooted in the past. The craft and craftsperson was not in-sync with this evolution. Hence, craft product lost the relevance in terms of consumer and market.

The need is therefore to re-establish the contextual relevance of the jewellery crafting techniques and infuse new energy into them. It was equally pertinent to explore the possibility of the Thewa thereby enabling it to move up the value chain.”

The craft is transformation of refine skills and socio-cultural context which is
practised even today but is gradually losing their relevance and popularity. The Thewa craft is on the verge of languishing as it is not evolved with time for various reasons and failed to cater consumers’ aspiration.

Based on the outcome of descriptive ethnographic study of Thewa craft in the tangible and intangible space in which the craft evolved over the period of time. As history and heritage is most important constituents of the ‘Thewa’ and they are essential to define luxury as well. A comprehensive model for luxury design and product development would be developed to address the aspiration of the consumer. The model would include usage of alternative materials/metals, product diversification and product innovation with a high fashion quotient.

The objective of this research would be as to commence a collaborative process of innovative product development, such that it benefits both the craft jewellery and the luxury jewellery segments

1.3 Objectives

The goal of the research is to conduct a descriptive ethnography study to document the evolution of “Thewa” craft and come up with a comprehensive model for luxury design and Product development to address the aspiration of the consumer.

Further the key objectives of this study can be articulated as follows:

1. To do descriptive ethnographic study, to document the evolution of “Thewa” craft of Rampura (Madhyapradesh and Pratapgarh & Jaipur region of Rajasthan

2. To develop sustainable model for luxury design and product development for languishing craft ‘Thewa’ with contemporary sensibilities
3. socio-cultural Interventions through design and techniques leading to product development for contemporary luxury market with traditional sensibilities

1.4 Hypothesis

• The rapid development of society within India as well as changing consumer tastes across the world have proved a challenge to the historic and ancient crafts which remain rooted in the past. One such craft is Thewa. Though efforts are being made to restore and uplift the several crafts of India, no prior efforts have been made to restore the craft of Thewa, probably because of the isolation of the craft and unwillingness of the craftsmen to share. Thus, there is a requirement to do a complete ethnographic study & documentation of this craft.

• This ancient Indian craft of jewellery-making, fusing gold foil on glass involves extreme craftsmanship and years of practice to achieve, with motifs and designs that tell stories rich in traditional and culture values which is extremely rare and nearly impossible to reproduce, make Thewa extremely desirable. Considering all that, a sustainable model of luxury design can be based around Thewa, provided there is a need to re-establish the contextual relevance of the craft.

• Further there is a lot of scope of interventions in the product development process itself, provided the traditional sensibilities of the craft are kept intact.

1.5 Limitation

As the craft has been practised in closed guard, there would be probabilities that craftsperson may not willing to come forward to share the techniques, infrastructure, original Thewa product, notion of their consumer segment, their point of view,
willingness to explore with alternative material and to increase level of quality, concept of fashion, new design and product development, product innovation. As it is a languishing craft hence not many craftsperson may be practicing the crafts.

**Limitations:**

1. A few families are practicing the craft
2. Limited/primitive infrastructure to developed newer product with high quality quotient.
3. High degree of quality of product developed for luxury