

Bapalal Keshavlal

All Things Beautiful

Mysterious, incandescent, alive with emotion, creating at first glance a semblance of desire — these are the words that India's leading luxury jeweler, Bapalal Keshavlal, uses to describe its philosophy of creating "all thing beautiful."

By Diana S. Zimmerman

Bapalal Keshavlal's evocative website invites its viewers to "Enter the realm of emotion made evident," and certainly that is the goal of company President and CEO, Romy Mehta, with Bapalal's inspiring new designs. "What sets us apart is our notion of what constitutes beauty," he explains. "Our desire is to create high-quality jewelry that, even more than offering a signature look, manufactures feelings." Certainly, it is something that these new collections do.

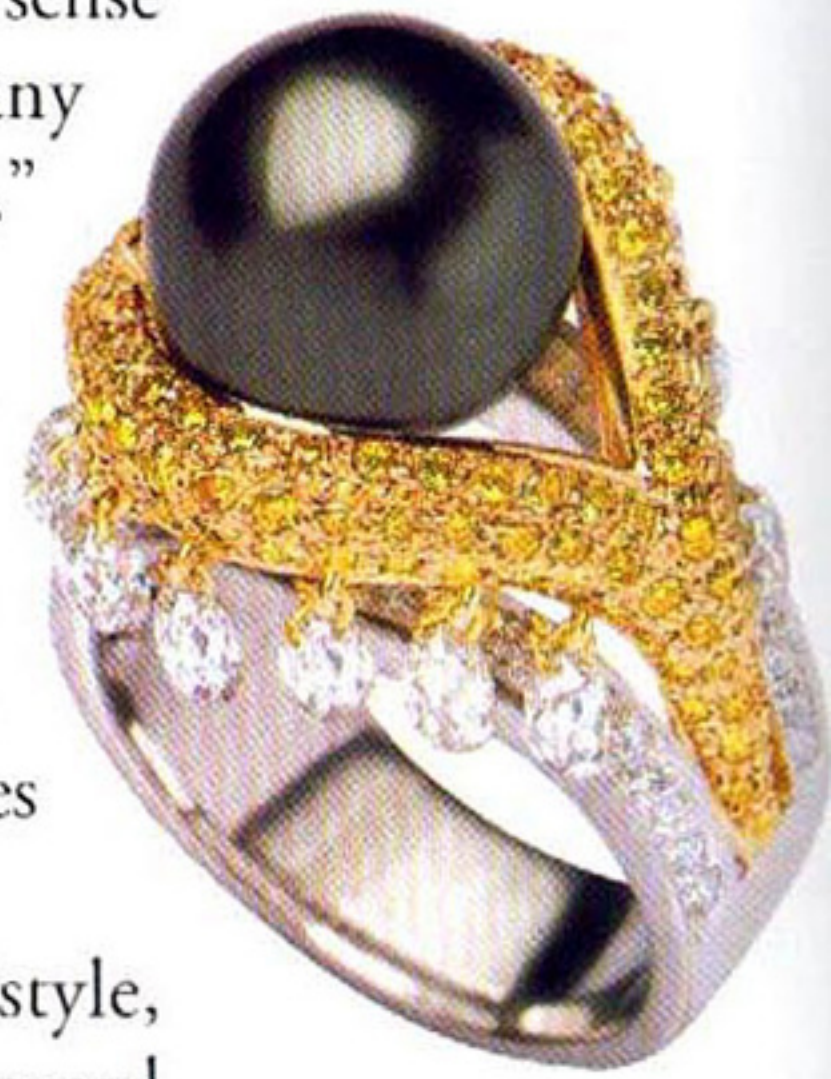
Bapalal's designs are classic in nature, with a high degree of detail, yet often feature quite untraditional shapes and sizes. It is a style that evokes a fundamentally innate sense of glamour, while at the same time is undeniably strong and independent. In many cases the designs are even provocative. "We try to design pieces for each emotion," Mehta elaborates.

All of Bapalal's collections are set in either 18K gold or platinum. One particularly stunning collar-style necklace features 34.2 carats of rose-cut diamonds along with 12.6 carats of emeralds. Other pieces include pendants with pavé diamonds and black onyx, rings with champagne diamonds that spiral over rose-cut whites, and elongated, sinuous earrings with diamonds and pink, blue, and yellow sapphires masterfully set in 18K white gold.

Adamant about providing both value and quality, as well as a high-degree of style, Mehta, who is the son of Bapalal Keshavlal Mehta, the company's founder, has focused on taking his father's business from a fixed-clientele luxury manufacturer to one that is overwhelmingly focused on creating a dynamic, design-oriented brand. With state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities and over 250 expert craftsmen, his approach to both marketing and product design has certainly done just that. In 2003, the company won India's top award for "Highest Exports Nationwide."

Luxury at an affordable price has also long been an objective of Bapalal Keshavlal and quite possibly one of the reasons for its unprecedented success. In the 1980's, Mehta invented the concept of "Luxury for Everybody" by offering what he coined as "mass production of luxury" to retailers around the globe. The concept was a runaway hit, as was evidenced by the numerous exporting awards Bapalal received over the ensuing years. In 1989, Mehta formed "Tristar Jewellery Exports" which became Bapalal's manufacturing arm in SEEPZ-SEZ, the duty-free zone of Mumbai (Bombay), where the corporate headquarters are located. In 2004, Bapalal Keshavlal Jewels, a second export manufacturing division was formed in the same area.

In 1939, Mehta's father, Bapalal Keshavlal Mehta, for whom the company derives its name, founded Bapalal Keshavlal in a tiny office. The senior Mehta, having split off from his family's company, Surjmal Lallubhai (founded in 1895) wanted to focus on becoming a high-end jeweler, rather than primarily a distributor of loose stones, as was the case with most jewelry businesses in India at that time. Although it was extremely





difficult at first, the many long hours and daily visits to a handful of prospective clients finally began paying off for this determined pioneer. His first sales were to friends for weddings and festivals, but as his reputation for service, quality, warmth, and integrity grew, so did his business. They are critical tenets that still guide the company today.

"Today, our older customers cannot stop praising my grandfather," explains Ritesh Mehta, Bapalal Keshavlal's grandson and a driving force in the company. "He was part of their lives. He was first and foremost a friend, then a jeweler to his customers. A lot of my actions today come from the wellspring of his influence."

"Papa left us with an immense sense of honesty, integrity and fair play," his daughter, Rita Mehta, adds. She, too, is active in the business. "His was the school for right thoughts, and that was the source for a conscious that is rare these days. In his presence, one felt secure and light-hearted." "Papa did not teach me the four C's of diamonds," Romy Mehta continues. "Instead, he taught me how to integrate principles and ethics into business; how to elevate them to the highest level; and how to retain modesty in success. What I value the most is the confidence he instilled in me by giving me a 'free hand' right from the start of my career. His guidance was only forthcoming when I was down, and his praise only subtle and proper."

Bapalal's two granddaughters, Charvi and Shipra, who also work for the company, are just as adamant about their grandfather's affect on the business and their lives: "We will always be indebted to our respected grandfather who enlightened us with his unshakable faith in the power of inner self, and the strong belief that 'while times may change, values must endure.'"

Times certainly have changed for this nearly sixty-seven year old company, but for Romy, it is still a family business based upon integrity and trust – a company whose goal is to always "provide its customers with the highest degree of quality and service." Today, under Mehta's direction, Bapalal Keshavlal is also becoming so much more. It is a company that is truly "memorizing by all things beautiful." And he is not by any means resting on his laurels. Metha's goal, as was his father's, is to bring India to the world stage as a provider of distinctive luxury jewelry, with Bapalal Keshavlal as its vanguard, with designs representing the highest quality at reasonable prices. It is a goal that Romy Mahta is well on his way to achieving. (www.bapalalkeshavlal.com) ■

